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[TO THEIR LIVES' END THE TWO MEN NEVER FORGOT THAT MOMENT AS THEY STOOD WITH THE GIRL'S SLIGHT FIGURE BEFORE THEM.]

NAMELESS.

CHAPTER V.

The demeanour of the three who were staying at Earlsmere would certainly have puzzled anyone who did not know how strangely they had been brought together. By tacit agreement Mr. Martin and Captain Beaumont ignored the subject of the unhappy child, who had been called Lillian Earl, although both felt deep sympathy for her sorrows. Each saw that it was impossible to aid her, or to devise any plan for her benefit until they saw the course adopted by Sir Ronald Trevlyn. The lawyer and soldier both believed he would be led by his mother, and utterly renounce all claim on Lord Earl's adopted daughter; but still to do so would bring on him the scorn of all honest men; and the girl herself was so beautiful, so lovely in her desolate grief, that a faint hope still survived that Sir Ronald would be true to his promised word.

After his interview with Lillian they watched him ride away, and then Mr. Martin sent a

message to his destined ward, begging her to allow him a private consultation with her. The message returned was that Miss Lillian was very tired, and had already retired to rest; early to-morrow morning she would be glad to see Mr. Martin.

"It must be all over!" commented the lawyer to his friend. "Well, he must have had a heart as hard as the nether mill-stone, to desert that poor child now. I suppose she is quite broken down, and so refuses to see anyone."

To their surprise Lillian joined them at breakfast the next morning, and it seemed to both that she was less sad than before that interview with Sir Ronald. Her eyes shone with the light of hope, her voice had lost its mournful despair; when the cloth was removed the lawyer himself turned the conversation to his wishes.

"I am going home this afternoon, Miss Lillian, and I want you to come with me! My wife and daughter will give you a warm welcome, and we will try to make you feel at home amongst us."

"And I ask you to remember!" put in

Cecil Beaumont, with a strange eagerness; "that I am the only living kinsman of the lady you so long believed your mother. I regret to say that I have neither wife nor sister; my mother is too infirm to receive visitors, or it would have given me real pleasure to ask you to make my house your home until your plans were in some degree settled."

Lillian Earl looked steadily at the two men, who, thus in their chivalry, wished to comfort her in her loneliness. She knew they meant just what they said, that had she closed with Mr. Martin's offer she would have been treated by him as an honoured guest. She sighed deeply. She was wondering why, since these two acquitted her of all blame, and saw in her position only cause for pity. Sir Ronald and his mother thought differently, and even the man who professed to love her as his own soul was ashamed of her.

"You are very kind!" said Lillian, falteringly. "I shall never forget your goodness to me while I live!"

"And you will come?" said Mr. Martin, briskly. "Then I fear you have a busy day before you. I must go up by the five o'clock



express—can you be ready by then? You know, of course, that everything that has been called yours—or that the late lord gave you—is yours, undisputedly, to remove and retain. It will be impossible to take them all with us to-night, but if you will make a list of the articles I will see that they are forwarded without delay!"

"Can I help you?" asked Cecil, kindly. "I am an old soldier, Miss Lillian, and used to making myself of service!"

"I am very much obliged," she said, gently, "but I think I would rather do it quite alone."

"And you will be ready by five o'clock?"

"I will be ready!"

She turned to reach the door which Captain Beaumont held open for her. As she passed him he said, simply,—

"Keep up your courage, Miss Lillian! No one in the whole world can think of you with anything but pity. If there be any shame or disgrace in this sorrow it will fall on another head than yours!"

She took up into his face with swimming eyes, and asked, sadly,—

"Not on papa's! Oh, I could bear anything but that! I should be more miserable than I am, if I thought anyone could lay his goodness to me as a reproach to his memory!"

"I did not mean the shame and disgrace would be Lord Earl's!"

She had left the room, when a sudden impulse seemed to seize her, and she hurried back, meeting the two gentlemen as they stood in the doorway.

"Indeed, indeed!" she cried passionately, "I am not ungrateful! We may not think alike about Sir Ronald. You have not known him—you cannot understand him as I do, but, indeed, I thank you both for all your kindness to me. While I live I shall never forget it!"

Before they knew her intention she had raised the Captain's hand and pressed it to her lips; then, as she paid the same tribute to Mr. Martin, she murmured, wistfully,—

"I may seem to disappoint you. You may think I spurn your kindness—but do not judge me too harshly. Remember I have no mother to help me, and I am so young—hardly nineteen!"

"My dear," said the lawyer, gently, "I shall never judge you harshly, or have hard thoughts of you! But it is eleven o'clock, and indeed you have a busy day before you. You had better go and see to your packing."

To their life's end the two men never forgot that moment, as they stood side by side, with the girl's slight figure before them. Her blue eyes wet with tears; her little hands locked nervously together; her whole frame trembling with eagerness, as she begged them, whatever happened, not to judge her harshly; but, through all, to think as kindly of her as they could.

Their faith was to be sorely tried—how sorely they little guessed; but though both were keen, shrewd men of the world their hearts were leal and true, and in spite of the cruel, black cloud, so soon to fasten itself upon Lillian, they were faithful to their promise. Never did either of them breathe a harsh word of her—never could they quite believe that she was anything but innocent and true. She lived in their memory, the sweet-faced girl they last saw standing before them in piteous entreaty, her blue eyes moist with tears, the autumn sunshine making a halo round her golden hair.

"It's a sad business," remarked the lawyer, as Lillian disappeared. "It's clear to me the man's a villain; but I'm afraid she doesn't think so, poor girl."

Cecil Beaumont sighed. Never since he lost his cousin Nora had any woman, gentle or simple, had power to stir his heart until to-day. If he had been ten years younger he would have flung himself at Lillian's feet, and begged her to take his name, rank, and fortune; all he had, so that she would let him love her and try to make her happy.

"I wish duels weren't over!" he said, vindictively. "I should like to put a bullet into that heartless scoundrel."

"I expect it is his mother's doing."

The captain shook his head.

"A man doesn't mind his mother's advice when he's come to the age of Ronald Trevlyn. Besides, Martin, you didn't see so much of him as I did. I went prepared to sympathize with his disappointment; and hang it, before I had been there ten minutes, I was wondering how Lord Earl could ever have accepted him for a son-in-law!"

The morning passed busily enough. Considering it might be a year or more before the new earl could be found and brought to take possession of his estate, it behoved Mr. Martin to see that things were well looked after in the interval.

The butler and the housekeeper, who had grown grey in the service of the Earls, and who had been left in charge all through the years of the late lord's wanderings, undertook their old responsibility. A few under-servants would remain to assist them; the rest were paid and dismissed at once. The grand apartment, with its costly furniture, stuffed in brown holland, were locked up. The keys of all the other rooms were lowered, and an agreement was made to maintain the place in good condition.

Mr. Martin was a business man, and he got through all this quickly enough before the luncheon bell sounded; anyone might have believed that the six months had been a dream, and that Lord Earl had never ended his London wanderings by bringing his adopted daughter to the lovely home, he fully meant to make his own.

"It's dusty work, sir," said Miss Lillian, with a tear, "worse than it's been since the place shut up before. We always had the things that my lord would come home and see, and live among us, and now—"

"Now you must look forward to his help, my good woman," said the lawyer, kindly.

"It may take a long time to find your master's nest of kin, but found he shall be some day, and I am quite sure the hope of welcoming the last of the Earls to his own estate will bear you up through the dreary time that is coming."

"And Miss Lillian?" asked the butler, eagerly. "Oh! Mr. Martin, is it true what they say?"

"What do they say?"

"That our dear young lady is nobody's child, and Sir Ronald Trevlyn—had luck to him—has broken off his engagement?"

"It is quite true."

"Then he ought to be ashamed of himself."

"I think so too, Mason, but saying so won't alter things. I am going to take Miss Lillian home with me this afternoon. I've got a daughter much about her age, and my wife is a first-rate hand at making young people happy."

The worthy pair looked at each other and coughed. John made an energetic sign to his wife, but she declined to be spokeswoman, so at last, rubbing his forehead reflectively, the old man began,—

"We've been in service a long time, sir, Mary and me—nigh forty years in this family—and we've saved a tidy bit of money, haven't we, Mary?"

"Very tidy, indeed, John."

Mr. Martin groaned.

"Don't tell me you're tired of service, and want to start a public-house on your own account, after we've made all the arrangements for your staying here."

"No, sir; we'll stay here as long as we're let; only, you see, we've no children, and no particular use for our savings."

It came out then. The simple, kindly couple wanted to bestow their all upon the girl they had thought their mistress. They would gladly have given up every penny of their savings rather than their master's darling should lack the comforts to which she had been bred. The lawyer thought he had rarely heard a more generous offer.

He refused it decidedly. He told them that he was a wealthy man, with only one child,

who would soon leave him for a husband's care. He and his wife were prepared to give Lillian an easy home, and when their own daughter left them the place she had so long occupied in their house. He added that he would himself tell Lillian of their kindness, and if ever she needed help or money he knew she would not be ashamed to apply to those who had spent their life in the service of the Earls.

Lillian did not appear at luncheon, but there was little remarkable in that, considering the amount of packing upon her hands. Mrs. Mason had been assisting her dear young lady, and reported to the gentlemen that Miss Lillian just seemed like one dazed; she had no interest in what was packed or what was left behind; all concern for the future seemed to have left her.

"Poor girl!" commented the Captain. "She will be better anywhere away from here."

Mrs. Mason shook her head mournfully, and returned to her charge.

"Mason, were you very happy when you were going to be married?"

The good woman started. Of all subjects in the world she had least expected Miss Lillian to ask of love or marriage.

"I think I was, miss. You see, John and I had known each other since we was boy and girl, and I know I could trust him to be good to me, come what would."

Lillian left the dresses she was folding, and sat down on the sofa trembling from head to foot.

"You're just tired out, miss. I'd better finish off these boxes, and you just rest a bit on the sofa."

"I think I will go out; the air will do me good, and, Mason, I must say good-bye to the place. I may never see it again. Before I go, I must just see where they have laid papa."

For the village churchyard sloped down to the Marshmere grounds, and only the still, cool waters of the river Mere separated the two. A little rustic bridge had been built across it for the convenience of some dead and gone Lord Earls and his family.

"You'd better not, Miss Lillian; it'll be too much for you; and as to not seeing the place again, why Mr. Martin's sure to bring you some day. He seems a right kind gentleman, miss. I can understand now how your poor papa loved him so well."

But Lillian persisted. She took a light basket on her arm, which Mason concluded was full of flowers to strew upon the new-made grave. She threw a scarf round her shoulders, and put on a broad-brimmed hat.

"And so you knew John ever since you can remember?" said the girl, suddenly, as though Mrs. Mason had only made the statement. "And you've been married forty years. Were you ever sorry, Mason?"

The old woman marvelled at the question, but she answered it very promptly.

"Never once, Miss Lillian. A woman never is sorry she's married unless she has a bad husband. Heaven help her; then, poor creature!"

Lillian threw her arms round the housekeeper's neck, and kissed her fondly; when the old woman could look up the girl had vanished, and her own face was wet with the young lady's tears.

The carriage had been ordered soon after four, for it was a long drive to the railway station; the luggage was in its place, and the gentlemen had waited some minutes without any sign of Lillian's coming, when Mr. Martin asked the old housekeeper if the young lady would be long.

"I thought she was here, sir. I have not seen her since she went out."

"Went out?"

"She said she must say good-bye to the place, sir. I thought perhaps she had gone to the churchyard."

There was another train at six.

Neither of the travellers turned or looked at the unexpected delay.

Mr. Martin directed the carriage to meet him at the front entrance to the church. He knew enough of the place to tell that if he walked through the grounds to the churchyard, aroused Lillian, and they both joined the carriage there, very little time would be lost.

He was not an irresolute or nervous man. In general he never shrank from a disagreeable duty, but on this occasion some strange impulse made him turn to Captain Beaumont.

"Come with me, Cecil."

In perfect silence the two men walked through the pleasant gardens to the rustic gate, which led to the river's banks—the bridge was nearly opposite it.

The recent rain had swollen the river, and its waters now looked "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue," as they swept past in a rapid current.

The Mera is one of the loveliest rivers in that part of Blenheimshire, but neither of the two heeded its beauty; they were looking at three homely objects lying on the bank—a broad-brimmed hat, a plain black coat, and a light basket half filled with flowers.

An awful presentiment came to them both that the girl who was nobody's daughter, whose love Sir Ronald had flung from him in scorn because she was poor and nameless, had sought for herself a home and forgetfulness in those deep, blue waters.

Mr. Martin had seen many a solemn sight, had heard many a tale of misery, but nothing had ever touched his heart more than the scene before him.

He looked at his friend, and saw that the soldier was sobbing like a little child.

"How could he?" cried Cecil Beaumont, brokenly. "The cruel, heartless scoundrel. The sin of suicide is his, not hers, for he drove her to it as surely as though he had put a cup of poison to her lips and made her drain it to the dregs. Oh, why are such mean, pitiful creatures allowed to breathe? I shall never think of Ronald Trevlyn but as Lillian's destroyer!—A curse on him now and for ever! A curse upon his present and his future! May this afternoon's work haunt him to his dying day, and her fair, sad face trouble him even in his dreams!"

CHAPTER VI.

GERALD CARROTHERS, Earl of Leigh, was one of the proudest noblemen of the day; but when he stood on the threshold of that gloomy house in the narrow street leading from the Tottenham Court-road, he took Mrs. Hall's horrid hand in his as respectfully as though she had been a countess, as he thanked her for her kindness to the sweet-faced, sad young lodger whom he believed to have been in very truth his wife.

"It was not much I could do, sir," said the good woman, simply. "Mrs. Carr was too proud to let me help her. She just seemed to get thinner and sadder every day; and at last one morning, when I think she had spent all she had in the world, she just sat down and wrote a letter. When it was posted she seemed to watch all day long for an answer. Three long days passed, and it never came. I was busy myself at that time, and I didn't see much of her; but we never had a wry word—never; and I'm sure I'd never have asked her for the bit of money she owed me; but I came home one night, and I just found a bit of paper telling me she'd gone. She couldn't bear to stay, she said, and know she'd never be able to pay me."

Gerald's face was white with pain.

"And you have never seen her since?"

"Never! Many's the time I thought of her, sir. There are some faces you see one can't forget, but from that day to this I never heard a word of Mrs. Carr or her baby."

"Her baby? Then the child was born alive?"

"It wasn't born when she left me, sir, but it was coming. I've often thought it would have been a mercy if the poor young thing was taken then. You see, sir, she was so

pretty and so delicate. She wasn't fit to take care of herself, much less of a child. It seemed as if, big as the great world is, there was no place in it for her and her baby."

And it was then that the Earl shook hands with Mrs. Hall, leaving a golden sovereign in her horny palm. And then he went back to his luxurious home, feeling he would give it all up—mansion, servants, riches, and grandeur—renounce them all, oh! so gladly, if his sweet young wife could be restored to him—if he could know for certain the story of his darling's fate.

It was in vain after that that society smiled upon Lord Leigh—that young ladies showed him plainly they were willing to share his coronet. The Earl was proof against their charms.

Between him and a second marriage there stood always the memory of his girl-wife, the fair, young creature who had been content to think the world well lost for love's sake only.

And while Lord Leigh lived in the gay world of London life, with all its pleasures spread out for his acceptance within the same great wilderness, there struggled bravely onwards a girl, whose sweet, wistful face grew sadder as the days passed, for whom no pleasures offered, whose society no one courted, and for whom—like the Earl's young wife and her little child—there seemed, indeed, no place in this great, cruel world.

Lillian Earl was too true and innocent to take her life with her own hand,

Up to an hour of the time fixed for her own departure from Earlsmere she had quite meant to yield to Sir Ronald Trevlyn's importunity, and become his wife privately, since it seemed his fortune did not permit of his claiming her in any other fashion; but as she talked to the old housekeeper, and heard Mrs. Mason's simple definition of love, it broke on Lillian with a bitter pain that Ronald did not love her; that, if he were ashamed to marry her now in the face of all the world, he would be as much ashamed afterwards to confess that she was his wife.

By a rapid decision the girl chose her own fate. She would be no burden upon her lover. He should think her dead, and so feel himself entirely free. The two true, generous friends who had offered her their aid should imagine her asleep beneath the tranquil waters of the river, safe from all sin and suffering. No one who had known Lord Earl's petted child should learn that she was in the wide world of London life, a toiler for daily bread.

Of course, in the excitement and trouble caused by the sight which met Captain Beaumont and his friend at the river brink, they postponed their journey to London until the next day.

There was no voice to tell them that late that evening a slight, weary figure reached a station ten miles distant from Earlsmere, and took a humble third-class ticket for the great metropolis.

When Lillian stood upon the bustling platform of the London terminus, a little lonely wail, she had much ado to keep from crying, but the consciousness of how much depended on her own exertions kept her calm. It was getting late, but shops do not close very early in that neighbourhood, so the late heiress proceeded to make her purchases, for some subtle instinct told her that a woman without luggage must be regarded with suspicion.

She bought only the most needful things. Already she was dreading what might happen when her little stock of money was exhausted. They barely filled the small portmanteau she had chosen for its cheapness, but they gave her at least the appearance of respectability, and it was mainly through them that a boxom, fresh-coloured landlady ultimately consented to receive her as an inmate.

A small bedroom at the top of the house for six shillings a-week! It was very humble shelter for the heiress of Earlsmere, but at least it was clean and tidy.

Mrs. Mathews looked sharply at her new inmate as they concluded the bargain, Lillian tendering a week's rent in advance instead of references.

"What name shall I put in the receipt miss?"

The new lodger turned white as death. It was questions such as this which brought home to her all the misery of her position. She knew she was not Miss Earl, but up to that moment she had never thought how she was to be called.

A chance trifle settled the point. The paper on the wall of her attic, the blind at the tiny window, the threadbare carpet—all were of one prevailing hue, and Lillian in her perplexity seized on the colour of her abode as her new name.

It was common; it would provoke no questions. There were hundreds of Greens in England. The most inquisitive person could hardly demand to which of them she was related.

"Miss Green."

The landlady appeared satisfied and withdrew. For more than a month she kept her lodger, and had no reason to complain. Week by week Miss Green's six shillings were forthcoming. She gave no trouble, uttered no word of grumbling, and if she grew paler and thinner day by day, if the light of hope gradually died out of her eyes, that was hardly the fault of Mrs. Mathews and her back attic.

Lillian was not idle in that time. She sought employment feverishly—desperately. She haunted the offices which profess to find situations for governesses, she answered every likely advertisement in the newspapers, but nothing came of it. She was too pretty to please would-be employers, and the account she gave of herself was too lame.

"She had been educated abroad, and her father's death had made her obliged to earn her own living. She had no relations or friends in England. She could offer no references."

People who had listened till then turned away at the last word. One or two, more uncharitable than the rest, told the girl point-blank she must be nothing better than an adventuress to dare to confess to such a thing and so the time wore on.

Every morning she started on her weary toil. Generally about one o'clock she got a bun by way of dinner at one of the city shops which combine the business of pastrycook and restaurant. It was a cheap refreshment, for besides the bun her penny procured for her a sight of two or three daily papers. Day after day she went there until the young woman behind the counter grew to expect her, and to regard her as much of a regular customer as the gentlemen who came every morning for their sherry-and-bitters.

She never spoke to any of her fellow-customers, she never knew they noticed her; but one day she was to be undeceived. In turning over the *Times* to find the advertisements she came upon a short paragraph which made her head swim, and brought the tears to her lovely eyes. It was very short and simple, being merely a notice to the heirs of the late Lord Earl that a considerable fortune was awaiting their acceptance; but the sight of the familiar name was too much for Lillian. She reeled and would have fallen but that a hand was laid supportingly upon her shoulder, and a voice said kindly—

"This close shop has upset you; come out into the air, you will be better there."

Almost unconsciously she obeyed the advice; the gentleman who had spoken led her out of the shop and then turned with her down one of those quiet narrow streets which are to be found so often near our crowded thoroughfares. In this case it led to the Embankment, and he guided her footsteps until he could place her on one of the benches which stand there.

Lillian expected he would leave her, but, to her surprise, he kept his position, while, overcome by the shock, her long pent-up grief had

its way. She sobbed until she stopped from sheer exhaustion.

"What is the matter?"

He was quite young, not more than five or six-and-twenty, but he spoke with a certain authority as though he meant to have an answer; he had had to fight life's battle himself, and found it a pretty hard one, but he had never seen a woman in distress without trying to help her.

"I cannot tell you," she said, simply; "I am better now, thank you very much."

He sat down beside her.

"You are not going to dismiss me like that, hope. You know we are not quite strangers; we have lunched together for weeks; believe me," and the deep voice softened with a rare charm, "two heads are better than one. I mayn't be able to help you much, but I will do my best."

She shook her head.

"There are some sorrows past cure," and he touched her black dress; "but others can be soothed by sympathy. Do you know I have watched you day after day growing thinner and sadder, and I have often wanted to speak to you before, only I thought it would offend you."

Lilian gave him one brief beam of gratitude.

"You really noticed that! I thought there was no one to care now. You see," and, oh! how sadly the girl spoke, "this world is very big, but yet there's no room for me."

"I shouldn't think you wanted much room," he said, half comically, "what do you wish for?"

"Something to do."

Gay Ainslie looked at her as though he was wondering what she was fitted for.

"And is there no one to help you—haven't you got any relations?"

"No."

"Nor friends?"

"No—and oh, I had better tell you all; I haven't even got any references. I think that is why no one will try me."

"No references!" as though he were weighing the obstacle. "Well, if you have no friends I don't see how you could be expected to have references. I need not ask you what you want to be; of course, you'd say a governess, everyone does now-a-days. Do you know I think I can help you?"

"Yes!"

"Well, I haven't got any children to be taught," and he smiled again; "but I happen to possess a sister who keeps a school, and if I send you to her she might be able to suggest something."

"But—"

"But what?"

"You don't know me?"

"I have seen you pretty often, and that—"

"And you can trust me without references!"

"I think so. Do you know, to my idea, the very fact of your confessing to having none proves you can't be a very black sheep. You see references are so very easily fabricated now-a-days that an unscrupulous person would invent them without thinking twice on the subject."

Lilian stared.

"Really!"

"I wonder you never thought of it!"

"I couldn't!" and the blue eyes were full of perplexity; "why it would be like telling lies!"

"That is not so very uncommon!"

He rose then, and took out his card-case; he scribbled an address on it hastily, and then asked,—

"Do you know Leckenham?"

Lilian confessed her ignorance.

"You take the train from Ludgate Hill to Leckenham, and our house is about ten minutes' walk from the station, anyone will direct you," and then, without another word, he turned away, raising his hat as politely as though the shabby stranger had been a duchess.

Lilian felt as if she was in a dream. After weeks of rebuffs and snubs it was very sweet to have a taste of the milk of human kindness shown her once again. She wondered if her

benefactor's sister were anything like himself. And then she rose and walked to Ludgate Hill, with more hope than she had felt for a long time.

Leckenham was easily reached, and Rose Bank as easily discovered. It was a pretty house approached by a carriage drive—as are all the houses in Leckenham. There was no intimation of its being a school, and Lilian began to fear she had made a mistake, when the door suddenly opened and a group of bright-faced girls made their egress, laughing and chattering the while. Thus encouraged our heroine rang the bell, and informed the smart young housemaid that she wished to speak to Miss Ainslie.

There was no difficulty; she was ushered at once across the hall into a small room, half library, half study, where a bright fire burnt cosily in the grate and a tray of tea things stood temptingly on the table. She gave the servant Mr. Ainslie's card, and tried to hope his sister might be like him.

Another five minutes and she could answer the question for herself. "Not the least in the world, so far as appearance went," for Miss Ainslie was very small and slight, with bright, black eyes that looked you through and through, and rather a sharp expression of face, as though she were used to reading people's character, and was rarely deceived.

It was getting dark now. The short winter's day was closing in. The lady stirred the fire into a bright blaze before she spoke to her visitor.

"I hope I am not dreadfully rude, but I don't think I have ever seen you before."

"Never," said Lilian, rather taken aback at her abruptness. "I hardly know how to excuse my coming to you."

"My brother sent you, didn't he?"

"Yes. He thought you would help me."

"I always redeem Guy's promises!" and the plain face grew beautiful with its kindness, "because I can trust him not to make rash ones. Now, what can I do for you?"

Lilian explained, simply, that she was alone in the world, and there was no one to help her to earn her own living.

Miss Ainslie looked at her sharply.

"And you know no one?"

"I know no one to whom I could apply."

"Then you have had friends and quarrelled with them. Hadn't you better make it up? Teaching's hard work."

Lilian shook her head.

"It cannot be harder than waiting! Oh, Miss Ainslie, I think the cruellest thing in the world is waiting! Day after day to try, and always to fail, crushes the life out of one!"

"Then you are not afraid of work?"

"I would rather work than wear my life out in an aimless, useless existence!"

"I like that," said Miss Ainslie, frankly. "What can you do?"

Lilian told her frankly.

She sat down to the piano when the lamp came, and played one of Mozart's sonatas. She answered her hostess in French and Italian. She proved that she was intelligent and rarely accomplished.

Kate Ainslie felt intensely surprised. She poured out the tea alone in silence. Not until Lilian had eaten and drank did she say,—

"I think I can help you, Miss Green. Only first I must ask you one question. If I knew your whole history is there anything in it that would make me refuse to aid you?"

Lilian never hesitated.

"I have injured no one. I have had a crushing sorrow, and I may have been impatient under it; but I have done nothing to make me unfit to instruct the purest children in England!"

For three minutes there was silence, then Miss Ainslie said,—

"And you could bring yourself to go into the country, to live miles away from any town—shut up in a dull schoolroom?"

"Thankfully!"

"You could bear to live with people not

noted for their consideration? People who think a governess beneath them; and that all gratitude for her care of their little ones is dispensed with by a quarterly cheque! You think you could bear that sort of life?"

"I can bear anything that is honest!"

"Then I think you may consider yourself engaged as governess to Lady Dacres. She was once a pupil of my own, and is good enough to declare that I am the fittest person to choose a sovereign for her schoolroom!"

"And you think she will have me?"

"She will have whomever I send. Perhaps I ought not to select one of whom I know so little; but you possess all the needed accomplishments, and very few people who do so are willing to exile themselves for nine months in one year, which is what accepting this situation means. I will write to Lady Dacres to-night, and if you will give me your address I will let you know her reply."

Lilian gave the address. Lord Earl's adopted child had no false pride. She was poor, and it was no disgrace to her that she lived in a poor locality.

Kate Ainslie, who knew London well, guessed a little how hardly things had gone with Miss Green, from the very fact of her lodging in Whitley-street, S.W.

She made no comment, only when Lilian rose she took her hand very kindly, and said in the sharp way which lost all its sting when accompanied by her smile,—

"Do you know, Miss Green, my brother is never mistaken in a face? The people he trusts always repay that trust! I look to you that Lady Dacres is not disappointed with my recommendation?"

"She shall not be if I can help it!"

And then the lonely wail—the nameless orphan girl—passed out from that warm, bright fireside into the cold, dark gloom of the winter's evening.

(To be continued.)

SHAKESPEARE'S MULBERRY TREE.

The house had been built in the reign of the seventh Henry, and Shakespeare bought it in 1597, when he was only in his thirty-fourth year. There he spent the last eighteen years of his life, and composed many of his plays; there he died, and thence he was borne to his tomb on the shoulders of some of the poor folk he had befriended.

It passed subsequently into the hands of the Cloptons, and a descendant of the Cloptons, and a descendant of the builder of Stratford bridge, demolished the old Tudor mansion, and replaced it with a Newer "Place."

But that deed of vandalism was out-vandalised by Parson Gastrell, who has been condemned to infamy by the unanimous consent of posterity.

In 1753 it pleased the reverend gentleman to cut down the mulberry tree Shakespeare had planted in his garden, and under the spreading branches of which Garrick and his friends had been entertained in 1794 by Sir Hugh Clopton.

But, as we know, it is an ill wind that blows good to no one; and the sacrilege gave an immense impulse to a "genuine" local industry.

Shakespeare's mulberry trees multiplied itself miraculously, and souvenirs of the poet were sold at handsome prices, to be circulated through all the quarters of the globe. Nor did the profits end there. An advertisement better calculated "to draw" could hardly have been devised.

So we are sadly reminded of the ingratitude of human nature when we read that the Rev. Mr. Gastrell, after some years of "boycotting," made a hurried hegira from Stratford in the night, "amid the rage and curses of its inhabitants."—*Blackwood's Magazine*.

FOUNDATIONS are good, and paths are good but they are not enough. Foundations are made to build on; paths are made to walk in.

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Give it me, Nell!" cried Vere, planting himself between her slim figure and the door. "Not till you have complied with my conditions," looking up at him with sparkling eyes.

"I will do anything you like—afterwards. Think of the poor fellow kept a prisoner upstairs."

"I do, till I die of laughing. I really thought you would have been the death of me at breakfast."

"But, Nell, it is no laughing matter," trying desperately hard to retain his own gravity. "I assure you nothing but necessity would ever have made him put them on."

"That is exactly what I want to know. What is this necessity for a disguise? It looks very bad for him, and shady for you."

"I can't help it," and Vere shook his head; "it is his secret—not mine."

"And this is his whisker, not yours?"

"Hush! somebody might hear you."

"That is your look-out—not mine!" with a parody of his own words.

"But you wouldn't want to work a great deal of mischief against a man who has never done anything to hurt you?"

"I don't want to give up an advantage without gaining an equivalent."

"Such long words stump me!" raising his eyebrows as he was in the habit of doing when vexed. "Will you give it to me, or will you not?"

"Tell me what mysterious plot you were hatching at Nun's Tower,"—she saw him start as she fixed her eyes upon him—"and when you have quite satisfied my curiosity on that point, you may also tell me what occurred to put your highness out of temper with me on Friday afternoon."

"The first is Mallon's secret; but the other is mine, and you are welcome to it. Do you know where you dropped this?" and he drew the red bow out of his pocket.

"Not at all," looking at it in surprise. "I didn't know that I had lost it."

"You certainly did not expect me to pick it up," nettled by her coolness.

"Is it a sin to drop a piece of ribbon?"

"It is something very like a sin to compromise yourself with a man who—"

"Who dares to say I did?" her eyes flashing fire.

"I, who picked up that bow in the arbour at Nun's Tower!" diplomacy forgotten in his jealousy.

"Nonsense, it never was there!" incredulously.

"No use denying it, for there it was. After what you had told me in the morning I was surprised."

"Then do you know," a light breaking over her puzzled face, "Godfrey Somerville must have put it there."

"What for, when he hadn't an idea that we were coming?"

This seemed incontrovertible.

"But it can't have walked."

"I am quite aware of it," stiffly.

"And I never was there but once—the once that I told you of; and I don't wear red bows on my habit."

He winced, for a falsehood from those pretty lips seemed to stab him, and the truth was so clear.

"We won't talk about it. Love him if you like, but for Heaven's sake let there be no further skulking!"

"I leave the skulking to those people who are ashamed to appear in their own characters!" drawing herself up proudly. "Lady Somerville is calling me, so, perhaps, you will open the door."

"Won't you give it me?" utterly disregarding the cries of "Nella, Nella!" outside.

"No."

"Out of petty spite towards me, you are

going to revenge yourself on Mallon. You don't know the harm you are doing, or I think you would be sorry."

"Tell him to trust me more than you do, and he shall have it back."

"How can I trust you? I would give anything on earth if I could!" pride, anger and jealousy flashing from his eyes.

"Nella, we can't wait any longer!" Meta called out.

She opened the door, and put out her head.

"Please go on; I'll walk."

"But, good gracious, you haven't got your bonnet on!"

"I know, it won't take a minute," feeling in a fever for them to go away, that she might not lose her chance of an explanation with Cyril.

But Lady Somerville was far too benevolent to think of letting her run after them in the mud, so she was compelled to hurry upstairs, sorely against her will, with the lost whisker still in her pocket.

When she came down, prepared to spring into the carriage with her gloves in her hand, she saw that it had moved off still empty, and that Lady Somerville, Sir Edward, Meta, and Vere were gathered round a horse, which was standing, with a rough-looking boy at its head, just in front of the steps.

By their pale faces she knew that something had happened, and, going forward, she recognised the horse as Pearl, begrimed with mud, and with a broken stirrup-leather.

"Has Mr. Somerville come back?" she asked, anxiously.

Meta caught hold of her arm, and hid her face on her shoulder, sobbing convulsively.

"We are afraid something has happened to the boy," said Sir Edward, clearing his throat. "His horse has come home without him."

"I knew it—I knew it!" and Lady Somerville clasped her hands together. "When he didn't come home last night I felt that something had happened."

"But there may be a mistake," suggested Vere. Turning to the boy, he asked him again where he had found the horse.

"Up Helmsdale-wood way grazing on the heath, with his reins a-hanging down in front of him, and mud all about his knees as if he had been down."

Meta shivered.

"And how did you recognize it as Mr. Somerville's?"

"I knowed it well enough; there's not a horse like it in the county."

"And you have no idea how he got there?"

"I knowed nothin' of 'im till I seed 'im afore my eyes, as I was drivin' the cow out, after the milkin' was over."

"Very strange!" murmured Sir Edward. "Go in—go in," to his wife, as he put his hand pityingly on her shoulder, "it mayn't be so bad as we think."

Nella, who felt aghast and awed, led the mother and daughter into the boudoir, deposited one on the sofa, another in an arm-chair; and, after poking up the fire, sat down on a stool between the two, murmuring every now and then such suggestions of hope or comfort as occurred to her.

The carriage was sent back to the stables, as the ordeal of going through the church service in public, with the mind racked by anxiety, was more than either the aunt or the cousin could make up their minds to face.

Vere knocked at the door, and opening it a little way beckoned to Nella to come to him.

"Tell Lady Somerville that Sir Edward and I are going out to fetch her better news, if we can; and"—lowering his voice—"remember that Mallon is at your mercy."

With a significant look he closed the door, and soon afterwards there was a clatter of horses' hoofs on the gravel.

"Nella, do you think there is any hope?" whispered Meta, raising her tearful face.

"Yes, dear, certainly I do. I think it is possible that Mr. Somerville was only slightly hurt, and that when he picked himself up Pearl was nowhere to be seen."

"But then you never cared for him."

"What has that to do with it? I should be very sorry if I thought he had really come to grief;" and with the possibility of his death hanging over her head, she felt so shocked that her regret was quite sincere.

"But, my dear," said Lady Somerville, faintly, "he would have sent us a message!"

"I don't think so,—you see men are so different—he might not think we were nervous."

"Hark! there's someone just come in;" and Meta started up, trembling all over with renewed hope.

Nella slipped out of the room. The servants were standing about in groups, their faces wearing as scared an expression as if Somerville had been brought in a corpse. Although he was not a favourite in the household, the mere suspicion of his death cast a mantle over his faults, and they only remembered that they had known him from a boy, and always looked up to him as their future master. The head housemaid had the corner of her apron to her eyes; the cook gave ponderous sighs, as she remembered the many times she had boxed his ears for stealing jam-puffs in the days of his aggressive childhood, when she had just put them straight in the dish to go up to the dining-room. The butler stood on the steps, with one or two of the footmen by his side, looking over the broad gravel sweep with a frown, not of anger but of sadness, on his face, thinking of the many half-sovereigns which had found their way into his pocket as hush-money for school-boy scrapes, before some cloud had come over the bright young life, and the wild, high-spirited boy had developed into the reckless, sorrow-stricken man of the world.

None of the household went to church,—grooms, gardeners, and stable-boys started off in different directions to look for the missing man; and the maids decided unanimously that it would be unbecoming and disrespectful to be seen in public when such a calamity was hanging over their master's house.

Meta, unable to keep still, roamed from room to room, and finally established herself on the top of a windy turret, in front of an attic window, which commanded the best view of the neighbourhood.

Nella, uncertain which she ought to be with, Meta or Lady Somerville, hovered between the two, haunted by the death-like look of Godfrey's face when she met him on the road to Alverley. Once or twice the horrid fear of suicide flashed across her mind—he looked so wild, as if capable of any act of desperation; but she banished it resolutely, and tried to convince herself that he would turn up after a few hours had passed, with a few bruises on his knees and elbows, and a lame excuse as to the reason for his not having let them know of his welfare.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MEANWHILE, Mr. Mallon was pacing up and down his room with the impotent impetuosity of a caged tiger. Vere had put his head into the room and told him of the return of Pearl without her master, then gone off in a violent hurry without answering any of his questions.

Danvers was sent down to glean any particulars that he could; but there was little to tell, except that the horse had been found by Helmsdale-wood, with clods of mud upon his knees, as if he had been down.

"Is the skin broken?" Mr. Mallon asked, quickly.

"No, sir; quite whole, without so much as a crack."

"Then the mud might be some cursed dodge, to give them all a fright! Danvers, do you think it would do if I cut the one whisker into two?" stopping still in front of the looking-glass as the bright thought occurred to him.

Rivers rubbed his chin, and put his head on one side, as if weighing the matter carefully.

"You see, sir, it isn't as if you were wearing a bonnet; the half would only hide such a small portion of your face that Mr. Somerville, especially, if he be anywhere above ground, would recognize you without any difficulty."

"Yes, I suppose so!" discomfitedly. "Curse it all why the deuce did one drop off if the other stuck on?"

"You see, sir, you got very wet, scrambling through hedges in the dark, and a damp sheet was falling all the while. But you've kept it up wonderful these four days; and many times my heart's been in my mouth lest the truth should come out; and then, poor Sir John, it would have out him up that he never would have held his head up again."

Victor's dark eyes softened to almost womanly tenderness as he thought of his father—the poor old man! His only pride was in his handsome, oh! valiant-minded boy, who seemed born to carry the old name with courage and honour through the world; and when that son was dragged from under his roof, and accused of a shameful murder, it is no exaggeration to say it nearly killed him. During the long tedious weeks that preceded the trial, he had changed from a vigorous middle-aged man, with a firm, upright figure, to a bent, worn-out old man, glad to support his failing strength on a stout stick. It seemed as if the shame and danger had literally been a heavy burden, which had bowed down his back.

Victor, stung almost to madness by the false charge, resented compassion as if it had been an insult; and felt so fierce and angry that he was inclined to quarrel, even with the few friends that still stuck to him. But in the midst of the storm of passion he was always gentle with his father, putting on a forced cheerfulness that the old man might be cheered into thinking that the trial was only a sham, got up by Somerville in his bewilderment at the loss of his sister. When it was over, and the jury let him off through want of sufficient evidence, he came back to his home and tried to go on as if nothing had happened, eating his heart out in silence, in order to make his father think that all was well with him. But the old man's love made him too clear-sighted to be easily taken in. He saw that "his boy," as he always called him, was simply fretting himself to death, and so sent him away from the Grange to be a wanderer on the face of the earth—an innocent Cain, yet with the mark of blood branded on his forehead.

When travelling he adopted the name of Mallon, that all men might not shrink from him as if he were a leper. None could know the wild craving for news of Dulcie which possessed him, although he had sworn that all was over between them.

Writhing at the thought that her name might be connected with that of a convicted felon, he wrote to her as soon as the first bewilderment had passed, to tell her that whichever way the trial went he wished her to be free. A dull despair came over him when the renunciation was complete, the trial over, and he knew that they had given him his life, after making it utterly worthless.

He had plenty of money with no use for it. It would have been a thousand times better for him if he had been obliged to work for his living; for industry is almost the only panacea there is for grief. But without necessity to push him on, he had not the moral courage to ask for employment, and face the usual questions as to his antecedents.

Without any motive, except to escape from England, he went over to Ireland, and chanced to come across Cyril Vere walking in the Phoenix Park with a friend. Vere instantly forsook his other friend, and came towards him, with eager outstretched hand. Evidently the hateful trial had made no difference to him; and Victor's heart grew several degrees warmer after his cordial greeting. Cyril made him come and dine with him at the Curragh, and then it was that the scheme was broached which was to make the outcast regain his former

place in society, and enable the lover to reclaim his bride.

It had cost him a pang to assume a disguise, and appear once more in the same neighbourhood where he had known the happiest days of his life; but his good fame depended on the success of the attempt, and Dulcie's white hand might be the prize!

With Somerville dead, and Robina gone, his last chance seemed to be dying; but he was in a fever to go out and scour the country once again, as he did last night when this ridiculous accident of the loss of his wheeler made it impossible for him to move. He was afraid of risking too much when his father would suffer mortally from the consequences of exposure as well as himself; but he could scarcely constrain himself to keep indoors when a great deal seemed to depend on his own exertions. Consequently, he fretted and fumed in wild impatience, driving Danvers almost mad by his reiterated questions as to what was to be done next—whether hair-dressers' shops were likely to be hermetically closed on Sundays? What was the earliest hour at which he could send off a telegram? &c., &c.

The valet was thankful to escape, on pretence of inquiring whether anything had been heard of Mr. Somerville, as yet; and Victor was left alone to pace up and down the room, as he had done all the rest of the morning, and pant for freedom, with the eagerness of a poor negro shut up in the hold of a slave-ship. His reflections were interrupted by a gentle knock at the door, outside which Nella was standing, with roseate blushes on her cheeks, and a small packet in her hand.

"Can't come in!" shouted Mallon, in a fright, remembering that he had forgotten to lock it behind Danvers.

"I don't want to," said a soft voice, which he recognised, to his immense surprise, as Miss Maynard's. "Cyril told us that you were unable to move; so I've brought a remedy which, I think, will do you a great deal of good."

"Awfully obliged!—indeed, I'm more than grateful—but—but nothing, I am afraid, will do me any good till I'm able to get a prescription from a London doctor. So sorry I can't open the door."

"I couldn't come in if you did; but, as you were only suffering from paralysis of one cheek, I suppose you can use your arms. Open the door, the least little creak in the world, and I'll promise to shut my eyes, if you like, whilst I poke it through."

Victor looked intensely puzzled.

"You are extremely kind to trouble yourself about me—"

"Be quick, or somebody will come!"

"But nothing will really do me good."

"Then why did you shut yourself up because you dropped it last night?"

The door flew open, and Mr. Mallon stood straight in front of her, looking so intensely comical, with a red handkerchief tied round his face, that she nearly burst out laughing.

"How can I ever thank you enough?" he said, fervently, as he took the recovered treasure in his hand.

"Remember, you can't come out yet," she said, with a knowing nod. "You've got to recover from facial paralysis, and that takes a very long time."

"Not with you as a doctor to pull me through!"

"Hush!" She put her finger to her lips to caution him to be silent, and fled down the passage, at the bottom of which she met Meta.

"I was just looking for you," she said with a weary sigh. "Do you know, Nella," clinging on to her arm, "I have a fancy that you would know better how to find him than anyone else!"

Nella opened her eyes.

"Why?"

"You are no cleverer, and so wide awake. Papa and Mr. Vere have gone to Helmsdale Wood; but that may be quite a wrong direction for"—with a little catch in her breath—"we

don't know how many miles Pearl may have gone after she had thrown him!"

"No; and he may have stopped somewhere on the road. Of course, I'll go if you like. Tell them to saddle Limerick whilst I get into my habit."

"You dear, good thing! I wish you liked him better!"

"You don't want me to love him as much as you do, I suppose?"

"Not quite; but you needn't hate him."

"I shouldn't, if he would let me alone; but, you see, he is always teasing me!" as she led the way into her room.

"I only wish he might do it again!" as the tears came into her eyes. "Oh, Nella! surely you will be sorry if he never comes back?"

"Yes, dear; that I should!" she answered, truthfully; for now that he was removed so suddenly out of her way, she began, like the rest, to forget his faults.

Meta went downstairs to order Limerick, but found that all the grooms and stable-boys had gone out in a searching-party, headed by the coachman.

One of the footmen, however, who had begun life in the stables, volunteered to perform the task of saddling the horse, to her great relief, and it was not long before he was brought round to the hall door.

She was very much grieved to think that Nella would have to go out alone, but promised to send Peter after her if he came home in time.

Lady Somerville did not approve of her going at all, and insisted upon her having something in the way of luncheon before she started, to which Nella would only consent if they consented to keep her company.

It was a dreary meal, the butler and footmen stealing round the table with the various dishes in solemn silence, whilst the hands that helped themselves shook, so that they could scarcely handle knife and fork, and tears mixed with the sauces on their plates.

Nella was thankful when it was over, for it was the ghastliest mockery of a luncheon at which she had ever assisted.

Kissing Lady Somerville, she hurried into the hall, and started as quietly as she could.

Meta called after her many last injunctions, and Nella looked back over her shoulder with a compassionate glance at the poor little patient face, with white cheeks still wet with tears, feeling that she would do much to bring back its colour and cheerfulness, but not knowing that she risked all that she held most precious in life as she rode slowly down the drive with the gloomy sky of the dull winter's afternoon overhead; and Meta's "Bring him back to me" in her ears.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Not knowing that Mr. Mallon had been to Nun's Tower on Saturday afternoon, and found it empty, Nella naturally concluded that if anything had really happened to Godfrey Somerville, the news would probably travel there as soon as anywhere else. Therefore she made up her mind to ride boldly up to the door and make inquiries.

If no one would answer her knock, she would ride back and feel that she had done her best.

Anyhow, no harm could possibly come of it, for if she happened to meet Cyril on the road, she would tell him her purpose, and persuade him to come with her.

Poor Godfrey! Now that he was dead, perhaps Cyril would cease to be jealous of him. But what was the good of that, if they became good friends just before his marriage with Dulcie Arkwright?

Oh, dear! this world was a very tormenting one, in which everyone but the Somervilles—father, mother, and daughter—seemed bent upon teasing her as much as possible.

At Elstone her life had been so quiet and uneventful, that she had found difficulty in counting the days, when she had grown out of

the weekly clean cambric on Sundays; but now she woke every morning with the expectation of a surprise, and was rarely disappointed. Still she would not exchange the one for the other, anything was better than monotony; and though she had not known it, Miss Arkwright must have been on the *tapis* long before she herself came to Somerville Hall.

She was pretty enough, certainly, to meet the most fastidious taste; but her conduct towards Mr. Mallon, a perfect stranger, would have seemed to most people rather extraordinary, letting him fiddle-faddle for such a time about the arrangement of her habit, after he had helped her on to her horse, and—Nella was not sure, but she suspected it—allowing him to squeeze her hand.

Her thoughts strayed to Mr. Mallon, a captive in his own room, first, because he had lost his whisker, and secondly, because he had to recover from a fictitious disease.

She could scarcely help laughing as she recalled his expression of surprise as she handed him the little packet, and thought it would have been great fun to keep him without it a little longer, if Cyril had not made her nervous as to the consequences. Then she reproached herself severely for thinking anything great fun, when she did not know if a friend of hers were alive or dead. It seemed so dreadfully heartless.

A man was coming towards her, who looked rather like an ostler in his Sunday garb. As he was the first individual whom she had met she pulled up and asked if he had heard of a gentleman who had been thrown from his horse?

The man pulled off his hat, and scratched his head.

"Dunno about a 'orse," he said, slowly, as if waiting for an idea which was loth to come; "but there be a 'gumman up at our place with a cut on 'is head, which 'e said as 'ow 'e 'ad got in a spill."

"Where is your place?" she asked, eagerly, feeling sure that the "gumman" was Somerville.

"Down yonder—Fox and 'Ounds—turn to the right."

"She did as she was bid, and rode down the first lane she came to, till she saw the sign in front of her, with its wonderful pack of hounds in full cry after a fox as big as a lion.

The landlord himself was standing at the door, and came forward at once to know what he could do for her."

There was a sick gentleman in the front parlour, who had hurt himself by a fall, he said, in answer to her inquiries, and he offered to hold her horse, his man being out of the way, if she didn't mind taking the trouble to go in and see him—first door on the right.

Nella slipped down with great eagerness, but felt a sudden feeling of shyness as she stood in the passage, wondering if Somerville would be glad to see her, or sorry to be found out. Then remembering the anxious ones at home, she tapped at the door, and receiving no answer pushed it gently open, and went in.

Instead of Godfrey Somerville's pale, good-looking face, with his short black hair tumbling over his white forehead, she saw an old man, with purple cheeks and stubbly beard, the top of his head swathed in a speckled handkerchief, a white choker round his neck, leaning back in an arm-chair fast asleep, with a pair of double eye-glasses dropping off his nose, and his podgy hands resting on a bundle of tracts.

Nella could scarcely help laughing at the ridiculous contrast between the apoplectic-looking dissenting minister, and the individual whom she was in search of, as she hurried out noiselessly for fear of waking him.

She told the landlord that it was a mistake, and got on her horse by means of an inverted beer-barrel, which had been often used for the same purpose by inebriate farmers who found looking after a stump very perplexing work when you saw two instead of one, and

both ran away from you as soon as you thought you had mastered them.

Annoyed at having been brought so much out of her way for nothing, Nella trotted briskly back into the high road, the sound of the church bells across the misty fields telling her that it was getting late. She was particularly anxious to leave Nun's Tower before dusk; but when she stopped in front of the gates, the avenue of oaks looked as if daylight had forsaken it already.

Only one bolt was drawn, and, putting her hand over the top, she was able to undo it. Her heart rather failed her as she rode slowly up between the trees, where Limerick had taken her before in her wild career—dark and gloomy, full of mysterious shadows, which seemed deep enough to hide the secrets of all the men and women that had ever borne the weight of sin or sorrow.

When she reached the lawn she thought of the day when she had first looked up at that desolate looking tower, and Somerville had threatened to shut her up in it if he chose. She shuddered at the remembrance, as well as at the dismal look the place wore in the failing light.

Slipping down off her horse, she tied the reins with some difficulty, because Limerick would not stand still, to the end of one of the iron railings that ran down the sides of the stone steps, and then, taking her courage in both her hands, knocked boldly at the door. But, as she waited for it to be answered, she wished with all her heart that she had met Sir Edward or Cyril on the road.

She had refrained from telling Meta of her intended visit to Nun's Tower, knowing that the statement would excite immense surprise, and bring down on her a shower of questions which she would find it hard to answer without betraying his secrets behind his back.

There was a noise behind the door as if a barricade were being moved away, and it was opened sufficiently to let the gruff voice of Sarah Prendergast come out of it.

"Who's there?"

"Miss Maynard. I've come to ask if you've heard anything of Mr. Somerville?"

"Don't know the name."

"But I think you know him," persuasively, "as I met him here once in the summer."

"He might have been here—can't say. Many gentlemen come here out of curiosity like."

"I saw him with my own eyes—my horse ran away with me and brought me here against my will—don't you remember?" trying to catch a glimpse of the hard, coarse face within.

"And then there come another wanting all sorts of things; there's no end to 'em."

"Just tell me if he is alive or dead?" coaxingly.

"I don't know him, I tell you. There are no Somervilles here; they live in a grand place out beyond Alverley. You had better ask there."

"But I've just come from there. Oh, do tell me quick!" looking round in alarm at the gathering shadows. "It is getting so late, and I'm in a hurry to be back."

"What is he to you?" eyeing the pretty face curiously through the chink.

"Nothing; only his family are in great distress. Think what you would feel if he had been like a son to you, and you didn't even know if he were dead!"

The soft voice was so pathetic in its earnestness that even Sarah Prendergast was involuntarily touched by it, and she shut the door, saying she would make inquiries of some one else, who might have picked up a bit of news about the roads.

Left alone on the doorstep Nella felt obliged to go down and pat Limerick's neck for company, unconscious of the eyes which were watching her from behind the curtain in the window above the portico.

Presently the door opened, and Sarah Prendergast, to her surprise, asked her civilly to step inside.

"Thank you, I haven't time to come in," she said, timidly, feeling a great reluctance to go inside those gloomy doors. "Just tell me where I can find him."

"I tell you I know nothing about him," crossly. "But if you don't want to come inside, there's nobody here that wants you!"

"Should I hear anything about him?" hesitatingly.

"Why, that's the only reason why I asked you in. There's some one who, maybe, can tell you."

Nella threw a glance of regret at the fading daylight over her shoulder, as a prisoner might, as she halted on the threshold of her prison; and could not help a shudder as the heavy doors closed behind her, and she stood for the first time within the precincts of Nun's Tower.

Mrs. Prendergast ushered her into the small room on the right, where Mr. Mallon had found the untasted luncheon, and disappeared. A minute later quick steps came down the stone hall, which somehow made her heart beat unaccountably fast; and, looking up, expecting to see some servant with a message, she saw Godfrey Somerville standing in the doorway, alive and unhurt, but with a strange look of delight in his eyes which made her wish herself ten thousand miles away as he came in, and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"That is an unexpected pleasure," said Somerville, with a slight bow. "I thought Meta might come after me, but not you."

"She begged and prayed me to go and look for you, so I came here as the only place I could think of. Now I will go home as fast as I can," moving nervously towards the door, "and tell them to dry their tears."

"Stop a bit!" placing himself in such a position that he entirely blocked the narrow passage between the table and the door. "Did you tell them where you were coming?"

"No; I held my tongue, out of charity to you."

"Nell, you are a trump!" his eyes sparkling as he drew a deep breath of relief.

"I'll tell them all if you call me that again," her cheeks flushing with anger.

"No, you won't; it would be absurd to call you anything else when we live so much under the same roof together. Did they think I was dead?"

"Yes, of course they did. Your aunt and cousin have been crying their eyes out."

"And you?" fixing his eyes upon her.

"I took the trouble to come and look for you; surely that was enough!"

"The best thing you could do."

"Are you going to ride back with me, because I can't keep Limerick standing in the cold?"

"Not yet. Sit down, I have heaps of things to say to you."

"You can tell me that at Somerville."

"With five pair of eyes to watch me! No thank you."

He was anxious not to frighten her, but every pulse was throbbing with wild and almost uncontrollable agitation. And he had some difficulty in keeping his voice calm and steady.

"Sit down," pointing imperatively to a chair. "I must speak to you, but Heaven knows what I shall say."

Afraid of exciting him, she dropped obediently into a seat, throwing an anxious glance at the barred window behind her, and then at the door, which she determined to reach on the first opportunity.

Somerville sat down beside her, and kept his right arm on the back of her chair, which constrained her to lean forward, resting her elbow on the table. He seemed lost in thought; the silence became so oppressive that she broke it with the first question that occurred to her.

"Why did you pretend to be dead?"

"Why shouldn't I? My whole life's a lie; and one more or less makes little difference."

"I should be ashamed to say so."

"Shame is for girls like yourself, when they commit some trifling peccadillo, which seems to them an enormous crime. Perhaps I felt it when a boy; now I have done so much that I don't know what it feels like—I am past it."

"I must go," trying to rise, but he prevented it.

"Stay where you are. I want to talk to you."

"Then be quick, for Heaven's sake. Think of those at home."

"I'd rather think of you," with a smile. "Look here, Nell, I'm going to confess to you—just as if you were a priest, and I wanted absolution. I wasn't a bad fellow once—not altogether bad, I mean. Shall I tell you what made me so? I had a sister—just about the same age as yourself—the brightest, cheeriest little creature that ever lived"—hardened as he was by the life he had chosen to lead, in talking of her his lip trembled. "We were as fond of each other as we could be—quite foolish for a brother and sister—and we were happy—wanting nothing more than to be together."

He paused, and leant his head on his hand, as if the remembrance of it were too much for him.

"Then Maltravers came. I don't how, but he made her love him; and I, who had been devoted to her all these years, was put on one side, as if I were nobody. I should have made up my mind to it if he had married her, and made her a good husband; but, instead of that," his eyes flashing with sombre fire, "he came down here, fell over head and ears in love with Dolcie Arkwright, and gave my sister back to me, her poor little heart broken, her mind gone. Wasn't that enough to make a man swear there couldn't be a God in Heaven!"

Nella turned to him with the tears in her eyes, her kind heart full of compassion.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured, softly, all his roughness and insolence forgiven because of his sorrow.

"Am I to be blamed for regarding that man as a murderer?" he asked, fiercely. "He killed her reason—he destroyed her life, as much as if he had taken her by the throat and strangled her. I paid him as he deserved, and if he had been hanged on the gallows I should have considered that the death was too good for him."

"Then your sister is not dead," her mind bewildered, as she felt one mystery, at least, unfolding itself gradually before her.

"Are you anxious to clear Victor Maltravers?" he asked, with a sneer.

"I don't know him," she said, proudly. "But if you have done him a wrong I should like him to be righted."

"Didn't he wrong me first? Can anything undo that?"

"No, but surely his punishment has been great enough already."

"Ah! I see. You want to give him back to Miss Arkwright, in order that Vere may be free. Well it depends on yourself. I'm sick to death of it all. I'll throw up the game if you give the word."

"I?" looking at him with startled eyes.

"Yes, you. Do you know that my aunt has a perfect horror of madness, and if I confess Robin's misfortune, I lose my last chance of the Somerville inheritance."

"Meta would never throw you over."

"Not Meta, poor little soul, but her parents would, and she is completely in their hands. But do you think I should care?" leaning forward with sudden eagerness.

"I know you would," speaking quietly, though her heart beat fast, at the look in his eyes; as he turned them full upon her. "I can't wait another moment."

"And do you know why I have told you all this?" laying his hand on her shoulder, to keep her where she was, and bending down so that his mouth came very near to her ear.

"Because you can't betray me—you won't have the chance."

"What do you mean?" as she shivered, and drew herself as far from him as the limited space allowed.

"I mean that if I am going to be virtuous you shall be my reward. Listen, Nell, and don't look so frightened, child—I won't bite."

"I want to go."

"You shall, but it shan't be yet; and when you go, I shall go with you."

"It is ridiculous to sit here talking in the dark when we can do it so much more comfortably at the Hall," trying to hide her alarm, which was rapidly increasing.

"Do you object to the dark? I don't. I rather like it, and I have special reasons for not wishing to light the candles. It might be a signal to the spies outside. It is light enough still for me to see you, and that is all I want. But wait a moment, I want to talk. You are sorry for Maltravers; well, he shall be cleared and made free to marry his Dolcie if he likes. You think Meta a great deal too good to be thrown away on a husband who does not care a farthing for her, except in a casually way. And all this I am ready to do—and why?"

"Because you are tired of acting a falsehood."

"Not a bit of it. I am going to do it because I cannot have two wives by the law of the land, and you must be one!"

"Never!" trying in vain to struggle to her feet, but he threw his arm round her, and kept her down.

"Don't you know that I can't do without you? It is your own fault. I told you so from the first. Nell, dear, listen to reason, and don't tremble so, as if I were going to kill you. You will stay here quietly to-night, and then to-morrow we will start for Paris by the early—"

"Let me go!"

"Not likely, after longing for this, till I could think of nothing else," drawing her to him, and kissing her cheek.

"Let me go!" struggling frantically.

"Help! help!"

"You may scream the house down, if you like; but, Nell, be reasonable. I don't want to frighten you. I would do anything on earth to make you happy."

"Then take me home!" panting with fear and indignation.

"I can't do that," looking down at her with eyes that seemed on fire, but restraining himself from any further demonstration. "If you won't come with me quietly, I shall have to carry you off."

"That wouldn't be easy in England," striving hard to find some means of frightening him in his turn. "If you got me away, I should find some means of coming back. I wouldn't stay with you for a day, or an hour!"

"I think I should know how to keep you," with a smile.

"And when I came back I would tell your secrets far and wide; there should not be a corner of England where you could show your face!"

"I shouldn't want to; but you are not the sort of girl to betray a friend."

"A friend!" with contemptuous emphasis.

"Yes, I'm a better friend than Vere. He flirted with you down at Elstone, and never told you that he had his eye on an heiress. When here am I ready to give up everything, money, position, and reputation, if only I may have you for ever,"—his chest heaving—"you, Nell, against the world!"

"Oh, Mr. Somerville!" clasping her hands in passionate entreaty.

"Mr. Somerville!" he repeated, scornfully.

"Call me Godfrey, or I won't listen to you."

"Godfrey, let me go home? Perhaps after a time I might like you better—and then—"

"You would betray me, and snap your fingers at me afterwards. I'm up to you!" he said, roughly.

"No, I would not breathe a word," ready to promise anything in her desperation. "Godfrey, don't you understand? If you took me

now against my will, I should hate you for ever and ever; if you let me go I shall be so grateful," her lips quivering, her cheeks as white as death. "Oh, if some lucky chance would only send Cyril to her help!"

"No no, I cannot let you slip. Why shouldn't you marry me, Nell, and be Lady Somerville when my uncle dies?"

"Because I hate you!" shaking all over with impotent passion. "Oh, Heaven help me!" as she realized the utter helplessness of her position, and the tears began to run down her white cheeks.

"My darling," leaning over her fondly, whilst the moonlight streamed through the uncurtained window and showed his black head in close contact with the gold, "I will make you happy, as sure as death!"

"You couldn't. Oh help! help! help!"

"Don't tire your poor little throat; you are as much alone as if you were in the middle of Salisbury Plain."

"There is a woman in the house."

"Yes, in my pay. If I chose to murder you, she would not stir a finger to help you."

Still he seemed anxious to silence her, by playfully putting his fingers on her mouth. This gave her a tiny ray of hope. She threw back her head and shouted.

She saw his face change as footsteps came hurriedly down the hall. In breathless silence she waited for the opening of the door.

(To be continued.)

EGYPTIAN HABITS.

The ordinary inhabitant of the towns passes his life in a simple and uniform manner.

Before sunrise he leaves his couch, performs the morning ablutions enjoined by his religion, and repeats his early prayer.

To say his morning prayer after sunrise is forbidden by the ordinances of his religion, and to allow the sun to rise over one's slumbering head is regarded as prejudicial to health.

He then drinks his cup of coffee, and smokes his pipe, either at home or in the public coffee-house. His breakfast, which he takes after the coffee, or sometimes before it, consists of the remains of his meal of the previous evening, or of cakes and milk, or for a trifle he procures from the market the ever ready national dish of ful, that is stewed beans.

He then engages in his avocations, buys, sells, writes, works, or moves about, all in the most comfortable, quiet and deliberate manner.

"What is not done to-day must be done to-morrow," in Arabic, "to-morrow, if God please," stands written on his forehead in large letters.

There is really nothing for which the Egyptian mechanics can be said to be famous. The things in which they used to excel are rapidly being forgotten.

The fine masonry of the older mosques would be thrown away on the architectural tastes of the present day, and hence the race of skilful mason is becoming extinct.

The coloured glass which used to be made in great perfection for windows and lamps is the product of a forgotten art, and most of the glass and china used in Egypt—even the national coffee-cups—are imported from Europe.

The same fate has come to the turners who used to make beautiful lattice window-screens, people now prefer glass, and lattices being no longer required, turners are forgetting how to make them.

The potters do a good trade in unglazed porous vessels for cooling water, and the palm furnishes occupation to many hands.

Egypt is no longer famous for fine linen; even its cotton and woollen stuffs are coarse, and its silk of poor quality.

The tanners, however, have not forgotten their cunning in curing morocco leather, and the love of ornament, extending beyond slippers, supports goldsmiths in all the small towns.

THE FLIRT.

SHE speaks, and her tone is so soft and sweet
You ignore other voices to catch the tone ;
And your heart is thrilled to a bitter beat
At her smile—is it yours alone ?

Her fan is a wonder of pearl and lace,
The fan, the modern enchantress's wand ;
She flutters and waves it with such a grace,
In her lovely jewelled hand.

She turns to speak to that man at her side.
Did her voice sink down to a lower tone ?
Is her damask cheek more deeply dyed ?
Or is it your fancy alone ?

But she's keeping her heart for someone else,
And you guess who it is with a roguish
smile ;
And a gush of magnanimous pity melts
Your first contempt the while.

Rich music, full of sensuous charm,
Comes chiming in with your pulse's beat ;
You circle her waist with a thrilling arm—
Was ever a waltz so sweet ?

Not she, but your vanity, leads you astray.
You will find your mistake and soon recover,
And smile in a very superior way
At the faith of the next poor lover.

We all have a talent for something, you know
Hers is for charming ; she does it well ;
As the present state of your heart will show—
Can she help this natural spell ?

She will jilt half a dozen Apollos like you,
Then marry some fellow so commonplace,
That, barring the fact he is as rich as a Jew,
You'll wonder what won him her grace.

And will she be happy ? Why not ? And
blest ?
Well, people, they differ in temper and taste ;
And a lover and ball-dress suits her best—
Yes, more than the love you waste.

T. B. M.

REDEEMED BY FATE.

CHAPTER XXI.

DOCTOR CLIFFORD—a hearty, good-tempered looking man of about thirty-five or six—came in the afternoon and had a long interview with Muriel, after which he proceeded to the studio of Philip, with whom, as has before been stated, he was rather intimate.

"I confess," he said, referring to Lady Urwicke, "her case somewhat puzzles me. She is, without doubt, very unwell, and yet I can find no traces of disease."

"She ascribes her indisposition to the weather."

Clifford shrugged his shoulders.

"As people are apt to do when they are unwilling to confess themselves ill, as Lady Urwicke is. There is something more serious the matter with her than that."

Thinking it might perhaps aid his diagnosis, Philip described the attack he had witnessed that morning, not omitting to mention the froth on the lips; and the physician looked graver.

"Strange!" he observed, drumming his fingers meditatively on the table. "This only makes the affair more complicated. However, I cannot say anything definite now, but, perhaps, after to-morrow I shall be better qualified to give an opinion."

He sent some medicine that same afternoon, and when he arrived the following morning found Muriel wrapped in her dressing-gown and reclining on the couch.

"I felt too tired to sit up," she said, lan-

guidly, as if to excuse herself, as he came and took a seat close beside her.

"You ought to have remained in bed, you are really too weak for the slightest exertion," he remarked, gravely, laying his fingers on the delicate wrist, in which the pulse-beats were so feeble and intermittent.

She shook her head and smiled.

"I hate lying in bed. Surely you can give me something that will put a little more vigour in me, and do away with this horrible feeling of lassitude."

"I will try my best, at all events," he answered, replacing his watch; "but you must aid me by obeying my directions—the advice of all the doctors in the world will do you no good unless it is followed! Do you sleep well?"

"Very well—in fact, too well, for even in the daytime I am conscious of a sensation of drowsiness."

"Ah! and your appetite you said was not good. Now tell me what your diet usually is, and more especially what it has been for the last week or so."

She complied; he listened very attentively the while.

"Of course you require more nourishment than you seem to have taken," he observed, as she concluded; "and abstaining from meat is lowering, still—"

Still, it hardly accounted for her prostrate condition, and the physician paused in perplexity. He was not a fashionable London doctor, accustomed to have his words regarded as oracles, and content himself with receiving a couple of guineas for scribbling off a prescription, after which all thoughts of the patient vanished from his mind; besides, being eminently conscientious, he was devoted to his profession, which was, indeed, all he lived for, for he was a bachelor, and had neither kith nor kin in the world.

Lady Urwicke's case, while presenting as yet no alarming features, baffled and interested him.

"You are naturally delicate?" he asked.

"Oh! no; I look so, but, as a matter-of-fact, I believe I am pretty strong. I have never had an illness in my life."

"That is what few people can say, even at your age," he remarked, cheerfully; "and we must endeavour that you should retain the enviable distinction. Still, under all circumstances, it is better you should not try your strength by sitting up, and I'll get a nurse in to see that my medicines are given regularly, and that you take plenty of nourishment."

But this Muriel strenuously objected to.

"My maid can do all that is necessary," she said; "and, indeed, it would do me far more harm than good to have anyone watching me. Pray spare me the infliction, and I promise to follow your directions to the letter."

Clifford gave way, thinking it better to humour her fancies, and then called in her maid—a rosy, good-natured-looking girl, who was devoted to her mistress, and very readily undertook the task of fulfilling the doctor's orders.

Before his departure, Muriel made a request that rather surprised Clifford.

"I wish you to say nothing to my husband that may tend to alarm him about my health," she said, a red flush creeping up her cheeks. "If he asks you, pray make as light of it as possible."

He gave the required promise all the more readily because, as a matter-of-fact, he was really unable to pronounce any definite opinion on her case.

That evening, instead of going out, Philip paced restlessly up and down the long gallery in which his rooms were situated, feeling even more depressed than usual. He had counted a good deal on Lady Urwicke's influence with Haidée, but the illness of the former had prevented her performing her promise, and so no light had been thrown on the young girl's mysterious conduct.

One of those moods in which we are inclined

to look at everything through a dismal medium had been on Greville all day, and his melancholy was not decreased by the sight of Haidée passing through the hall attired in evening dress and leaning on the arm of Sir Jasper, who was conducting her to the carriage waiting outside. They were both going out to dinner; and, indeed, it was very seldom they were at home now, for Haidée seemed feverishly anxious to throw herself into all the gaiety possible, and the baronet, on his part, was only too delighted that his neighbours should have the chance of seeing and admiring his fair bride elect.

Philip went to the stained-glass window, and, throwing it open, leaned out and let the cool softness of the evening breezes blow across his throbbing temples, while he looked at the gardens, all bathed in the amber sunset radiance, and beyond them to the park, with its grand old trees, under which the deer were herding together amongst the bracken.

"Is it for this fine house, these rich lands, and Sir Jasper's title she has sold herself?" he muttered, bitterly. "I have heard that women are weak, fickle, changeable as the wind itself, and now I am inclined to believe it. Well, the chances were hardly fair. The baronet has wealth, position, an honoured name to offer, while I have nothing but love."

Only, he said to himself, he would have given such love as should amply have compensated for the lack of all else.

The sunset colours faded to a pale, faint primrose, that in its turn to grey, and then the dusky shadows of twilight began to close round the silent landscape, and in the purple depths of the heavens stars came out, while from above the tops of the trees rose the moon's young crescent, looking like a pearly boat on an azure sea.

Everything was very still; only the far-off note of a corn-crake from the dewy fields down by the river, or the shrill scream of an owl as it flitted noiselessly by broke the silence; and perhaps it was owing to this cause that a faint rustle as of drapery being pulled aside, made Philip glance up quickly and look round.

At the end of the gallery near which he stood were green-baize curtains, placed there for no ostensible purpose, for here the passage ended; and Greville felt a slight thrill of superstitious fear run through his veins as he saw that one of these curtains was held back by a human hand, although there were no signs of any one behind the drapery.

It was only for a moment this weakness lasted, then he dashed forward, pulled the curtains aside, and, as on a former occasion under similar circumstances, found himself confronted by—nothing.

"There must be magic in it. I swear I saw the hand!" he cried, speaking aloud in his excitement, and gazing round to make sure he was alone.

Puzzled and annoyed, he pushed back the baize and made a careful examination of the oak panelling, which was elaborately and fantastically carved like the other parts of the corridor, but he found nothing to confirm his idea of there being an exit; and so at last, more bewildered than ever, he gave up the search, resolving to seek Sybil and tell her what he had seen, in the hope that she might possibly be able to explain it.

Accordingly he proceeded to her sitting-room and tapped lightly at the door, which was closed, and receiving no answer concluded she must be downstairs.

To make sure he gently turned the handle and looked in, and then found himself mistaken, for there, at the table close by the window, he saw Miss Ruthven bending over a basket of roses, into the hearts of which she was carefully dropping the contents of the curious glass phial he had restored to her outside Lady Urwicke's boudoir a few mornings ago. Beside the basket was a large open volume.

She was so absorbed in her employment that she had not heard his knock, but when

she saw him she started violently, and there came in her eyes an expression that was strangely like fear.

"I beg your pardon for intruding," said Philip, standing with the door-handle in his hand, and wondering at her agitation—so different to the usual calmness of her demeanour. "Have I startled you?"

"Yes," a little haughtily. "You should have rapped before entering."

"I did; only I suppose you were too busy to hear me. I wanted to tell you of an incident that has just happened in the corridor."

She received his story of the hand incredulously enough—was inclined to ridicule it in fact.

"You have been listening to the silly stories of the gallery being haunted, and they have influenced your fancy," she said. "It is impossible anyone can have been there, for, as you know, a dead wall closes in the passage, and no one could have escaped from behind the curtains without passing you."

"But I saw the hand as distinctly as I see yours at this minute!"

"You thought you did—the darkness deceived you."

"It was not dark—not so dark as it is here now."

"Well, then, you were the victim of an optical delusion. What other explanation can there possibly be, unless you believe in spirits?"

For a minute he felt almost sorry he had come since she was so sceptical, and clearly not inclined to pursue any investigations in the matter.

"I was wondering," he said, hesitatingly, "whether there was a secret door behind the curtains—you know one often hears of such things in old houses like this."

She started, genuinely surprised at the suggestion.

"No, I think not—I am sure not. I have lived here a good many years, and never heard such a possibility mooted before."

"Then I suppose I must be content to accept the occurrence as one of those strange ones destined to remain for ever a mystery," he observed, rising and going towards the door.

On the threshold stood Chevell, Lady Urwicke's maid, with every sign of agitation in her manner.

"Oh, if you please, miss, will you come to my lady? She is in a sort of fit, and looks to me as if she were dying!"

CHAPTER XXII.

LEFT to himself, Philip's wonder and perplexity concerning the event that had just happened was lost in anxiety on Muriel's account.

He had really conceived a great liking, amounting, indeed, to fondness for her, based, no doubt, on the kindness and sympathy she had invariably shown him. Besides, he pitied a fate he instinctively felt to be hopelessly unhappy.

She seemed so lonely—ill in a house where no one cared for her, save Haidée, from whom the knowledge that her indisposition was anything more than temporary had been studiously kept, and who had been prevented by Sybil from going to see her.

Lord Urwicke had that very morning gone to London, summoned thither by Mr. Darley on business connected with his estates, and really unaware that there was any danger to be apprehended from his wife's condition; for Dr. Clifford, in answer to his inquiries, had contented himself with the vague platitudes of "want of energy and general debility."

In point of fact, Claud had come to the conclusion that the sooner he and Muriel were away from Heathcliffe Priory the better for both; and as his own house would not be finished for some time yet, he resolved to hire one at the seaside, where his wife would stand a better chance of recovering her health, while he would escape the entanglement into which Sybil was subtly drawing him.

Perhaps the thoughts of putting so many miles between Muriel and Chevella was not without a very strong influence in helping him to this decision.

Philip, not knowing these undercurrents, looked on his departure as particularly heartless at this juncture, and, almost unknown to himself, constituted himself the champion of the woman who had held out her hand to him in kindness the first day he had entered her father's house, and who had done her best to help him ever since.

He waited in the passage outside her door, until he saw Chevella come to fetch some vinegar for bathing her mistress's brows, and then he stopped her to ask how Lady Urwicke was progressing.

"Well, sir, she's come out of the sort of fit that took her," answered the girl, whose usually red cheeks were now quite pale; "but she seems too weak and ill even to speak; and if I had my way I'd have the doctor here at once. He told me to send for him in case she had one of them attacks, but Miss Ruthven says it isn't worth while. She says my lady will be all right in half-an-hour, and it isn't my place to contradict her."

From this Philip concluded the attack to have been similar to the one he had witnessed; and this being so he at once decided Dr. Clifford ought to be summoned.

Rightly or wrongly he distrusted Sybil Ruthven, and had done so from the very commencement of their acquaintance, therefore he put no faith in any solicitude she might pretend on Muriel's behalf. He had heard the gossip current concerning her former relations with Lord Urwicke; and from what he himself had witnessed was inclined to believe his marriage had made no difference in her sentiments, whatever it might have done in his; and on many occasions when he had seen them together he fancied he had detected a bitter and contemptuous loathing in Sybil's manner towards the woman who bore the name and title she had once fancied would be her own.

Taking into consideration all these circumstances, Philip came to the conclusion that he would be justified in assuming the initiative, and sending for Clifford. True, Sybil would be very angry, and perhaps Sir Jasper, too, at his presumption; but, after all, that was a secondary consideration, for he did not value the good opinion of either, and in a few days he would probably say good-bye to them for ever. If by his action he saved Muriel any suffering he need not stay to calculate after-consequences.

Thus arguing, he snatched up his hat, and in a few minutes was out in the park, walking along at a good stiff rate towards the village. Fortunately, Clifford was at home, so Philip got up in his dog-cart and rode back with him.

"Perhaps," he said, as they neared the house, and the remembrance of Lord Urwicke's anger at his display of interest in Muriel struck him, "you had better not say anything about my having fetched you, but drop in casually as if it had been your own idea to come. I will get down here, and after you have seen Lady Urwicke, I should like to hear your opinion. I'll wait in the library till you come!"

The physician nodded assent, so Philip reached the house on foot about ten minutes after he had gone in. He went straight to the library, which was in semi-obscurity, for the lamps had not been lighted, and the only illumination came from the moonbeams, which were filtering in through the stained-glass windows, and falling in long slants of coloured light on the carpet.

He had not been there very long before the door was gently unclosed, and quietly as a shadow Sybil Ruthven glided in. Without perceiving the motionless figure seated in the gloom of the curtains, she advanced to the steps, ascended them, and replaced a large volume on one of the highest shelves; then she

came down and withdrew as noiselessly as she had come.

"Lady Urwicke's worse—much worse," said Dr. Clifford, entering the now lamp-lit library, and looking grave and disturbed. "Her pulse is feebler, her strength has considerably diminished, and unless a change takes place very soon she will sink from exhaustion. Do you know when Lord Urwicke is likely to return?"

Philip answered in the negative.

"Miss Ruthven professes ignorance of his movements—and I dare not question his wife. If he were here I should tell him I wished to call in a second opinion; and, indeed, I shall do so on my own responsibility to-morrow morning unless the patient shows signs of improvement."

"Do you think, then, there is danger?"

"Not immediately—that is to say, she will not die to-night, or to-morrow, but her life is certainly not worth forty-eight hours' purchase."

Philip received the intelligence in shocked silence—so young, so fair, had the fiat really gone forth that she must yield her soul into her Maker's hands!

"And I candidly confess that I do not understand her case," continued the doctor, coming and standing where the lamplight fell on his perturbed face. "Paroxysms such as the two she has had don't come without adequate cause, but what that cause is I am unable to say. The hypothesis of poison has suggested itself to me—unlikely, improbable as it is—but her symptoms do not correspond with the action of any poison I know, and it is a branch of my profession I have especially studied, so I am forced to give the idea up as untenable."

Philip started violently, and grew pale.

"What particularly suggested the notion?"

"Those shadows in her face. As you may perhaps be aware, lead poisoning produces a blue line on the gums, but for all that I am quite sure it has nothing to do with her condition. It is not often I find myself in such a dilemma, but now I simply say, I am at a standstill. All I can do is to keep up her strength by administering as much nourishment as possible, and directly I get home I shall send off a nurse whom I can trust, and who will sit up all night with her."

"Then you don't intend staying yourself?"

"I can do no good at present, and I have another patient I am bound to see. When I have left him I shall return, and hear how Lady Urwicke is; but I don't wish to alarm her by remaining in the room. I want to keep from her all idea of her danger if possible, and I have perfect confidence in the woman I shall send, who will not quit her side for an instant."

"Miss Ruthven is not with her now?"

Philip, in a quick tone of alarm.

"Miss Ruthven—no. She was in the room when I first went, but I sent her out to take some roses away, and I told her not to return, for it struck me her presence made Lady Urwicke nervous, and unable to answer my questions coherently. She was very angry at her dismissal, for she seemed extremely anxious to stay, and, I believe, deeply resented my insisting on carrying my point. You see, women are such perfectly unreasonable creatures that there are only two ways of managing them—either cajolery, or peremptoriness!"

"What did you say about roses?" asked Philip, who at any other time might have laughed at this classification with regard to the fairer sex, but now only looked very disquieted.

"Why, when I entered the Viscountess's room I could hardly breathe, the atmosphere was perfectly stifling with perfume, and I saw on a table close by the side of the bed, a great bowl full of roses. Everyone knows how unhealthy flowers are at night, but I certainly had no idea how entirely their scent would permeate the air. I never smell anything like it in my life before. Of course, I ordered them out immediately."

After this the doctor hurried off in order to send the nurse, while Philip sat still, his head

resting on his hand, until at last he sprang up and reached the book Sybil had put back on the shelf. It was, as he supposed, the volume on "India" he had seen her studying once before, and as he turned the leaves they fell back quite naturally on a page towards the middle, as if that part had been consulted oftener than the rest. From page 126 it went to page 127, so one leaf was missing, and this struck the young man, as he was aware the work was very old and very rare one, and prized by Sir Jasper as being in perfect condition. He felt quite sure those two pages had not been out when he looked at it last.

A terrible suspicion had come to Philip—so terrible that at first he had put it aside as unworthy of himself or further consideration; but in spite of all his efforts it would intrude itself, and little by little a theory shaped itself out in his brain; of which every chain in the link of evidence seemed well-nigh perfect. If his reasoning were right, then Fate had indeed thrust on him a fearful responsibility!

"There are two things that will put an end to doubt, and until I obtain them I will reserve my judgment," he said to himself, his face cold and stern. "One is to get possession of that missing leaf, or at least see its contents—How can I manage it?"

There was only one place where he could be sure of finding a duplicate volume—the British Museum, and here he resolved to seek it. He would take the first train in the morning, and if he made the best of his time he might manage to return early in the afternoon. Having arranged this, he proceeded downstairs and waited in the hall until the arrival of the nurse—a clean, quiet, neatly-dressed woman, with a repressed power latent in her face.

"You are going to sit up with Lady Urwicke to-night?" he said, stopping her.

"Yes, sir."

"And you will allow no one else in the room?"

"The doctor has given me strict orders not to do so, sir."

"That is well; but I have another injunction to add. Will you see that your patient neither eats or drinks anything but what you yourself prepare, and, above all, allow no flowers to be brought in the sick chamber?"

The nurse looked surprised, but at once gave the required promise. She did not know who Philip was, and naturally supposed him to be a relative of Lady Urwicke's.

The young man then slipped in her hand a note, on which he had written a few words to the physician, and satisfied that he had taken all the precautions necessary, went upstairs again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE *habitus* of the reading-room of the British Museum are, as a rule, too much occupied in their own concerns to trouble themselves much about their neighbours—not but what this rule has its frequent and glaring exceptions, too—and no one seemed to notice the young man who, with the aid of a reference book, found the work he wanted, and then sat down and proceeded to consult it.

Presumably his search was successful, for he took a sheet of paper from his pocket-book, and copied in full a paragraph from pages 127 and 128, after which he read it over carefully to see that it was correct, and then went out, called a hansom, and was driven to—Street, Strand, where he descended, and stood for a few minutes hesitating in front of a window in which different kinds of oriental articles were exhibited.

Presently he went in, and was met by a dark-eyed, Jewish-looking woman, dressed in some Eastern texture, and with huge gold bangles in her ears.

"What may it be your pleasure, sir?" she asked, her accent, as well as the idiom of her speech, betraying her foreign nationality.

Philip looked round cautiously before answering, and dropped his voice almost to a whisper as he said—

"I want an Indian essence for the purpose of perfuming flowers."

The woman looked at him keenly, and, apparently satisfied by the result of her survey, led the way through the shop, which was littered over with gorgeous oriental tissues, gold and silver brocade, Turkish rugs, Dragon china, and all the multitudinous variety of a museum or curiosity shop. Philip followed her into a smaller chamber, apparently used as a laboratory, for in it were retorts, crucibles, and the various appliances of practical chemistry, while at the farther end stood a small, wiry-looking man, who, with a glass mask over his face, and a pair of bellows in his hand, was blowing a heap of powdered coal, mixed with other substances, into a glow. He left off as he saw his visitor, and came forward.

"What can I do for you, sir?" removing his mask, and looking into Philip's face with deep-set, penetrating eyes.

"Some little time ago," said Philip, returning his gaze with one of equal significance, "a lady came here for the purpose of procuring a drug, which she took away in a small glass phial, engraved with eastern hieroglyphics. Now I am anxious to get a small quantity of the same essence, and she told me I should have no difficulty in obtaining it here—you understand me?"

"And the name of the drug?"

"I believe European chemists call it simply *lean blanché*."

The man nodded assenting. His wife had already left the room.

"You remember the lady of whom I speak?" asked Philip. "She was tall and dark, and wore a long black cloak."

"I remember her perfectly."

"Well enough to recognise her again?"

"Certainly."

"She came here July 25th."

"Right," said the chemist, turning over the leaves of a book; "I keep a list of all my customers' purchases, also the date of their visit, in case of reference being required. I suppose you are aware this essence is expensive?"

"What will be the price of a small phial like the one taken by the lady in question?"

"Twenty guineas."

Philip had not so much money with him, but he took off a diamond ring he was wearing—a gift from Mrs. Maxwell—and laid it on the table.

"I will redeem it in a day or two," he said, and the chemist, after examining it with the critical attention of an expert, put it away as if satisfied as to its value, and then took from a locked cabinet a small sealed phial, precisely like the one Sybil Rathven had declared contained attar of roses.

Five minutes later, Greville was again in the hansom on his way to Euston Station, from whence he found he could get to Heathcliff by an earlier train than from Paddington. So preoccupied was he, that on leaving the booking-office he ran up against two gentlemen, and would have passed on with an apology had not the younger seized him by the sleeve and detained him.

"The very man, by Jove!" exclaimed Robert Pierson—for it was he. "Why, Greville, where are you off to in such a hurry?"

Looking up to return the barrister's greeting, Philip saw that he was accompanied by a tall, loosely-built, brown-skinned man, with white hair and whiskers, clad in a travelling suit of light grey—a man whose broad, horny hands announced him to have been no favoured child of fortune, but one who had earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. He was scanning Philip with earnest attention.

"I was just on the point of telegraphing to you," said Pierson; "but as you are in town, I shall be saved the trouble. Will you come to my chambers at once?"

"I cannot, my train starts in ten minutes."

"But you must put off going until to-night."

"Impossible! It is a matter of the most

urgent necessity that I should get back to Heathcliff immediately."

The barrister stared. There was a repressed excitement in the younger man's demeanour that he could not understand, and the gravity of his expression seemed to say it owed its origin to no very pleasant source.

"Of course you know your own concerns best," he observed, shrugging his shoulders; "but I certainly thought you would be anxious to meet Mr. Matthew Seaforth, who I now have the pleasure of introducing to you."

Philip looked up eagerly, and held out his hand, which the colonist warmly shook.

"Mr. Seaforth has arrived a little earlier than I expected. I met him at Liverpool, and we have just come up together," said Pierson, leading the way to a more retired part of the station where they were comparatively alone. "On our journey I explained your history to him, and he is inclined to coincide with me in thinking you his nephew."

"More inclined than ever now," said Seaforth, in a voice of some emotion, "for unless my hopes themselves deceive me, you are marvellously like my sister Grace."

"I have been thinking we can easily put the matter to the test," remarked the barrister, who, in spite of his usual stoicism, shared in a degree the excitement of the other two. "Seaforth has in his pocket-book the letter he received from his sister telling him of her son's birth. Do you think you remember the writing on the outside of your stolen packet sufficiently well to identify it?"

Greville answered in the affirmative, and thereupon Seaforth, with hands that trembled slightly, took out an old, yellow-looking epistle, with the corners frayed, and the ink faded, and handed it to the young man.

"It is the same!" exclaimed Philip, with a deep inspiration, and for a minute neither of the three men spoke.

"Then all doubts are at an end, and your sister's identity with Greville's mother is distinctly proved," said Pierson—who was the first to recover his self-possession—to Matthew Seaforth. "Can you not," turning to Philip, "postpone your journey now and come back with me, so that we may consult together respecting the next steps that ought to be taken?"

Philip shook his head.

"But surely," exclaimed the barrister, a little impatiently; "there is nothing awaiting you at Heathcliff of equal importance!"

"I tell you it is a matter of life and death!" answered the young man, who even now trembled with apprehension as he thought of what might be happening at the Priors. "I would not miss the next train for a thousand pounds; but to-morrow I will be at the Temple without fail."

With this Pierson was forced to content himself, and at that moment the guard blew his whistle, and Greville had only just time to rush forward and take his seat before the train started.

The barrister followed him, and stood at the window of the carriage after closing the door.

"By-the-by, how is it you didn't answer my letter?" he asked, suddenly.

"Letter—what letter? I have not heard from you since I last saw you," shouted Philip, contriving to make his voice heard above the roar of the engine and the clash of metals; and Pierson, who was naturally surprised at the reply, found himself at that minute forced to hop out of the way in order to avoid being annihilated by a piled-up wagon of heavy luggage propelled by a philosophic porter, who was seemingly under the impression that his remark, "By leave, sir," fully entitled him to drive his juggernaut over the body of any passenger hapless enough to get in his way!

It was about three o'clock when Philip got back to The Priors, and his first action was to rush upstairs and knock at Muriel's dressing-room, his summons being answered by the nurse, who said Lady Urwicke remained in the same condition, too weak even to utter a



[PHILIP SAW SYBIL BENDING OVER A BASKET OF ROSES, INTO THE HEART OF WHICH SHE WAS DROPPING THE CONTENTS OF A PHIAL.]

word. She had, however, been free from pain so far.

"Dr. Clifford has been here nearly all the morning, and has only just left," she added. "He telegraphed to Lord Urwicke's club, and also to Sir James C—, the great London physician, who is coming down to-night."

"Then no one has seen the Viscountess?"

"No, not even Miss Darrell, who stayed outside the door for more than an hour, weeping so bitterly that it was as much as I could do to refuse to let her in. However the doctor's orders were strict, and, as I told her, I dare not disobey them. Miss Ruthven came too—has been to the door several times to inquire."

"And there are no flowers in the room?"

"Not one. Miss Ruthven had a rose in her waistband when she came. I noticed it because of what you said last night."

Philip turned away satisfied—at least no more mischief had been done.

Still he could not be too expeditious in guarding against danger, and so without even staying to change his coat or take the marks of dust and travel from his appearance, he sought Sybil, who he found in her own room—a room rich in rose-coloured silken draperies, mirrors, gilding, and ormolu; for Sybil's sensuous, pleasure-loving nature revelled in luxury, and, to do him justice, her brother made no effort to stint her expenditure.

She herself was sitting close to the flower-filled window attired in a tea-gown, and having an appearance of lazy languor, as if life held nothing of more importance than the duty of drinking afternoon tea out of quaint cups of Sevres china.

"Come and sit down, Mr. Greville, and I will give you some tea," she said, waving him towards a chair. "Do you take sugar?" pausing with the silver tongs poised in her hand. "You won't have any? Very well. I make a rule of never pressing anyone."

She sank down among her cushions again, and Philip watched her as she leaned back, grace-

ful, negligent, beautiful, her full red lips curved in a half smile, her heavy white lids drooping over the lustrous eyes till the long lashes swept her cheek. Had he wronged her in his thoughts? Could she indeed be capable of what he believed, or was the theory he had built up only a hideous fancy, a monstrous delusion?

No, the proofs were too strong. This woman, with her soft, southern grace and subtle beauty, was only a lovely human panther, who would give no quarter, show no mercy to the victim hapless enough to fall in her clutches!

"You are quiet, Mr. Greville. Is it only for the purpose of looking at me you have honoured me with your presence?" she asked at length, with a playfulness that masked the impatience she dared not show.

"No, unfortunately I have come to speak on a subject of the utmost gravity—Lady Urwicke, in fact."

He was keenly observant of the swift change that passed over her face.

"What a sepulchral voice!" she exclaimed, with a little shiver. "One would think from your tone that I had something to answer for regarding her."

He rose up in his excitement and stood before her, pale, stern, and accusing.

"You have all to answer for—for if she dies, as is only too probable, you will have been her murderer!"

(To be continued.)

HUNGARIAN BEAUTY.—A fair correspondent is inclined to be enthusiastic about the beauty of the Hungarians. The men are simply gorgeous creatures—the handsomest in the world. The first of them she saw, the captain of a Danube steamer, was "a very god in physique," and she soon found that he was only a fair specimen of the race. These grand fellows dress with taste and magnificence. In describing one of them who visited her, she says: "He came in robes as splendid as the robes in an Eastern tale. He wore the costliest of

velvets, the richest of satins and the rarest of furs. He wore a girdle of precious stones, and his superb mantle was fastened across his breast by large rosettes composed of jewels. I am willing to confess that I was impressed. Never have I seen a man so splendidly arrayed and so worthy of it. You can fancy how imposing a company of these nobles are on State occasions. I attended a requiem mass at which the nobles were all present in this magnificence, and they were simply dazzling. Costly jewels are sometimes worn at the knee or adorn the tops of the high boots, which are always worn outside of the trousers." The women are pronounced nearly a match to the men—large, handsome and commanding.

MADAGASCAR WIDOWS.—Upon the death of any man of position or wealth, on the day of the funeral the wife is placed in the house, dressed in all her best clothes, and covered with her silver ornaments, of which the Sihanada wear a considerable quantity. There she remains until the rest of the family return home from the tomb. But as soon as they enter the house they begin to revile her with the most abusive language—telling her that it is all fault that her *wizianu*, or fate, has been stronger than that of her husband, and that she is virtually the cause of his death. They then strip her of her clothes, tearing off with violence the ornaments from her neck, arms and ears. They give her a coarse cloth, a spoon with a broken handle, and a dish with a foot broken off from which to eat. Her hair is dishevelled, and she is covered up with a coarse mat. Under that she remains lying all day, and can leave it only at night; and she may not speak to anyone who goes into the house. She is not allowed to wash her face and hands, but only the tips of her fingers. She endures all this sometimes for a year, or at least for eight months; and even when that is over her time of mourning is not ended for a considerable period, for she is not allowed to go home to her own relations until she has first been divorced by her husband's family.



["ONE WORD FOR PITY'S SAKE, ONE WORD OF HOPE," CRIED GASTON. "WHAT SHALL YOU ANSWER—YES OR NO?"]

NOVELETTE.]

A WIFE'S PERIL.

CHAPTER I.

PARTING.

DESPITE the cheerful crackle of the coals, and the vivid tongues of flame which leapt and danced hilariously up the chimney, one somehow cherished an uncomfortable suspicion that the fire had not long been kindled upon a hearth less carefully swept and polished than usual, for the little breakfast-room at Westlands (which usually wore so bright and cosy an aspect at the matutinal meal) felt cold and drear this wretched morning.

Albeit the chandelier was lighted above the groaning table, and the urn hissed, and the crisp, buttered toast omitted a fragrant aroma, and something hot and savoury simmered under a gleaming silver cover.

The fact nevertheless remained that it was not yet seven o'clock of a raw November morning, as the insidious fog, creeping in through every imaginable crevice, and penetrating to one's lungs and the very marrow of one's bones, effectually reminded all human creatures who had been sufficiently indiscreet to quit the shelter of blankets and eider-downs thus prematurely.

That indescribable air of oppression, inseparable from impending farewells, moreover, hung—heavy as a lowering cloud—upon the domestic horizon.

"Eat your chop whilst it is hot, John; and those are kidneys, I fancy, under the cover. Yes, broiled to perfection; and I must insist on your demolishing at least a couple of eggs. Remember, it is very doubtful when or where you next enjoy a meal!"

"But, indeed, I can hardly choke down a mouthful. Don't worry me, please! Let me have my own way, Josie, for the last time. I'll trouble you for another cup of coffee, how-

ever, without cream, dear. Yes, just a dash of brandy in it. Phough! one needs something down one's throat to keep out this terrible atmosphere! There's a silver lining to every cloud, and some consolation in the thought that I shall soon be shot, at any rate, of these infernal British fogs!"

As John Staunton spoke, emulating an indifference it was all too evident he did not feel, his glance wandered towards a silent figure half buried in the depths of the big elbow-chair drawn close to the fire. And even as he received the steaming cup from his sister-in-law's white hand, he was too absent-minded even to murmur the curt, stereotyped monosyllable of recognition which was at least her due.

"Will you not have some coffee, Vivien? It will not spoil your appetite for breakfast later, and—"

"No, thanks!"

Even as she spoke "Vivien" shivered slightly, and drew the folds of her elaborately-brodered *peignoir* more closely about her slender figure.

The tiny toes of gold-embroidered Turkish slippers were just visible beneath the hem of that dainty garment, and for a moment they stirred—impatiently it seemed—whilst their owner vouchsafed this laconic response to her husband's question.

But Vivien herself still gazed fixedly into the flames, one white hand buried among the tawny, unbound gold of those luxuriant tresses rippling down her back far below her slender waist, for she had made but a hasty toilette, and attempted no coiffure. The long hair was simply brushed back from her milk-white brow, and confined with a comb at the back of that small, perfectly-shaped head, which might well have graced the shoulders of Milo's world-famed Venus.

A moment later Staunton rose, to seek outside in the hall (he said) the Bradshaw which was all the while in the pocket of his long-tailed travelling coat.

Then Miss Prior glided swiftly round to her sister's side, and bending down over the back of her chair, she whispered, hurriedly,—

"Vivien! dear Vivien! rouse yourself! Make some slight effort! Your apathy gives you an air of indifference, which I am *sure* you cannot feel. And only think how terrible for John at such a moment! Rouse yourself, dearest, if only for *his* sake!"

Before the young wife could vouchsafe reply, John was back again, and, standing by the table now, was gulping down his scalding coffee.

"Will you oblige me, Vivien," he said, a moment later, in a voice of studious calm, "by going upstairs to your father's room and inquiring whether there is any admittance for me? It is later than I thought. I must be off almost immediately. It would be a pity, therefore, for him to struggle down at this unreasonable hour!"

Vivien rose up with that ostentatious air of obedience and exaggerated deference which some fair belligerents know so well how to assume at a given moment, although they would die at their posts sooner than yield an ell of submission chanced to be foreign to their purpose.

She swept across the room, a tall, stately figure in her limp, blue draperies, passing her husband so closely by that the floating gold of her hair brushed his shoulder. Yet she did not even momentarily glance towards him.

An impressive shudder convulsed John Staunton's stalwart form, and he put the cup down hastily as the door closed upon his wife.

"Good Heavens! Josie, this is terrible! I must cut it short; self-control is rapidly deserting me! Promise me—promise me for the love of Heaven that you will guard her, shield her, save her from *herself*, not less than from every human ill and earthly peril!"

He had seized his sister-in-law by her slender wrists, and now gazed down passionately into her white, rigid face, for her eyes were studiously averted.

"I will do my best!" Josephine responded, in a low voice, and the simple words uttered in so faint a tone, lacked none of the solemnity of a vow.

"I know you will! Heaven bless and aid you, child! Yours will be no facile task!" Then, half-unconsciously it seemed, John Staunton bent his head and pressed his lips to his sister's brow, as sign and seal of this solemn fraternal compact.

"Papa wishes you to go upstairs, John; he is only partially dressed!" It was Vivien's voice, and turning hastily as he released Josephine's cold hands, John Staunton's eyes met his wife's gaze. She was very pale, and shivered slightly; then she resumed her seat by the fire, and stretched her white fingers out towards the flames.

John Staunton bowed his head, and passed from the room without a word; then there was silence, absolute and unbroken, save for the monotonous "tick-tack" of the clock upon the mantelpiece.

"Vivien!" Josephine said at length, in a low, choked voice; "why—why do you put such cruel constraint upon your feelings? Your poor heart must be breaking; yet you sit there cold and impassive as a woman made of stone. Surely—surely, you will unbend, if only for a moment before—before it is too late! Think only how John is suffering. Do not send him from you without one tender word or token that you are not in truth so callous, so frozen as you seem!" Josephine clasped her hands imploringly, outstretched her lip almost fiercely between her teeth; this words had come pouring hotly forth, tumbling one over another in low, agonized tones, and as the last syllable died away, it left her breathless, spent, trembling in each slender limb from excess of emotion repressed.

The young wife laughed; yet what a hollow, dreary, mockery of mirth it was! There was neither smile on her lip, nor light in her eyes—they gleamed dully, like tarnished steel.

"Let it suffice," she answered, strangely; "you are not cold, nor callous. You, at least, have given him a 'token' which, without doubt—"

But John himself entered the room at this juncture—his face was set and bloodless, as features chilled by death. Without a word he advanced towards Vivien, and as she rose involuntarily to her feet, he silently folded his wife in his arms, clasping her tightly for one long moment to his burning heart.

But even then he did not speak. Vivien's white lips fluttered faintly for a breathing space, but the words—47 words they were—died unspoken, smothered at her birth.

Releasing Vivien from that close embrace, John Staunton turned towards his sister-in-law: he passed his arm about her waist, he laid one hand upon her head, and fervently, as once before, he pressed a long caress upon her brow.

"John—John!" Josephine cried brokenly; "Heaven be with you, go where you may! and bring you back in safety—back to your wife and me!"

"Heaven keep you both!" he faltered, hoarsely; "Josie—dear Josie! remember your promise! Vivien, be true to yourself and me!"

Then he was gone like a lightning flash—still the young wife never moved.

"Vivien!" Josephine cried, in a low choked voice, which emotion rendered well-nigh inaudible; "will you not follow him out? Have you nothing to say to John?"

Her voice was frenzied, her eyes were wild, like a waxwork figure; she held one arm up lifted rigidly, pointing—pointing towards the door.

Vivien slowly turned her head, and steadfastly returned her sister's gaze.

Then she burst into a tremulous laugh, but before she could find speech the hall-door closed with a loud report; the sound of wheels was heard upon the gravel, and the cab, filled high with the impedimenta of a transatlantic traveller, dashed past the Rectory windows,

and turned out through the open gate into the broad, high road.

Then a wild cry escaped Josephine's white lips, "Oh! Heaven!" she wailed; "Vivien! Vivien!"

But to that broken cry there came no response; the younger sister stood immovable with that strange dubious smile of mute dejection frozen seemingly upon her lips. One moment the gaze of these two women met; each looked questioningly into the others' eyes, then Josephine fell forward, fainting at her sister's feet—a huddled shapeless heap. So still she lay that for one long moment it almost seemed the vital spark had surely sped—that life itself must be extinct.

That swoon was terribly like death!

CHAPTER II.

"THE WOMAN WHO REMEMBERS IS SURELY LOST."

"What?"

For a moment she manifested no sign of having heard his voice; then she slowly shrugged her supple shoulders, and elevated her delicately-arched brows—refolding the while those many closely-written pages lying on her knee; these she deliberately replaced in their large blue envelope, and then—only then—she glanced swiftly up from under her long curled lashes, and the eyes of these two for the first time met—those of Gaston De Launay, full of French surprise—those "darkly, deeply, mysteriously blue" orbs of Vivien, at once wistful, yearning, tender, defiant, obdurate.

"Well?" again De Launay questioned breathlessly, in a still lower tone. He bent his head to read the expression of her face, and stretched forth his hand appealingly (yet albeit it hovered close above, he did not venture to rest it on her knee). "Remember—remember only, whilst you keep me thus wantonly in the tortuous agonies of suspense, that your answer involves for me issues scarce less vital than those of life and death!"

Her lashes momentarily quivered, she moistened her ripe under-lip. Ah! surely he could not fail to note how, under the muslin and lace of her summer corsage, her heart beat thick and fast. That heart which was just then stirred by some emotion strange as novel (perilous, bewildering, yet how sweet!) which Vivien might not pause to analyse, for which as yet she found no name.

"He bids me give the matter four-and-twenty hours' reflection, and then to-morrow telegraph my answer—simply 'yes' or 'no'!"

"And which will it be? Oh! Vivien, be merciful! I—my powers of endurance are exhausted! End this intolerable suspense!"

That thin brown hand of his had fluttered downwards, and now grasped her warm, white wrist as in a vice. What words shall describe the hoarse, tremulous eagerness of his tone, the feverish light in his eyes? Beneath glance and touch Vivien felt her heart leap wildly—an electric shock seemed to thrill through her every vein; she shook in each slender limb, and involuntarily she glanced aside.

Yet she essayed a little laugh—in order to gain time.

"But he must be kept upon the rack in any case another four-and-twenty hours! Poor John, who—"

"Pah!" with an indescribable gesture of withering scorn the Frenchman literally recoiled—releasing the wrist he had thus long held prisoned, and shrinking back from her side—"he suffer—he? What should such an one know of suffering, of anguish, of suspense? the cold-blooded, apathetic Englishman, who could journey forth across the ocean leaving such a wife behind! Monsieur's veins run water—'est évident'—his pulse is stagnant, his languid heart barely throbs. Ah! in the sunny South 'tis otherwise! There men know how to love! Pah! mere human machines at best! You English I doubt whether any of you ever really feel!"

"Yet John thinks himself a model hus-

band!" Vivien faltered, still with averted eyes, rapidly folding and unfolding with nervous fingers the thin blue sheets upon her knee. "My father and Josephine both consider I—I won a matrimonial prize far beyond my actual deserts when I became John Staunton's wife!"

"Pah!" De Launay laughed with infinite scorn, yet there was a dangerous undercurrent withal in his voice just then, which told at once of tenderest sympathy, and of passionate anguish repressed. "What should they know? An old man and a woman—a woman who herself has lived unsought, unwon, unwon! How should they estimate the depth or meaning of all that should lurk in that one word—love? A husband who could leave you, madame! Phang! Loved with his brain it might be (as too many of your compatriots love), assuredly not with his heart. Real love is unreasoning, irrational, it is born of *acme*, not of intellect, of passion, not of logic! Believe me, that it is at best but poor weak stuff the chilly sons of Britain offer to their mistresses, in lieu of the genuine nectar we quaff and drain to the very dregs in sunnier, southern climes. Your villainous fog, it seems to me, steals its way into insular breasts, dampens even affection, makes passion chill, and love—immortal love himself—but a shivering, oscillating, pitiful thing!"

With these last words he rose up suddenly (as though he dare no longer trust himself so near her side), and pushing back the low drooping branches of the great elm beneath which Vivien sat enthroned—among the shawls and cushions which converted the rustic bench under the tree into a luxurious divan—he emerged upon the smooth-mown, sun-bathed lawn, and began pacing hurriedly to and fro.

Vivien sat motionless, just as he had left her creasing her husband's letter this way and that, now folding it oblong, now square—that letter which had come as the arbiter of her life-long fate.

Should she obey its tender behests, or should she briefly cable—"No?"

He had bidden her do as she pleased, and though it "pleased" her not at all to rejoin her husband after eighteen long months of separation almost at a moment's notice—for the friend under whose charge Mr. Staunton proposed Vivien should place herself sailed from Liverpool within ten days—yet but for the accidental presence of Gaston De Launay at Westlands that sweet June afternoon it is doubtful whether it would ever have occurred to Vivien even to hesitate as to the form her reply should take.

For she had found the year and a-half of John's absence long and tedious—more tedious than she could say, until she had fortunately (?) stumbled one day by chance in Piccadilly up against Monsieur Gaston De Launay—a friend of those happy, still vividly remembered schooldays, when Madame De Launay's hotel in Paris had been at once a haven of refuge and an Elysian retreat for the lonely English girl, incarcerated in the dreariest of pension-naires near the forest of Fontainebleau.

Then what more natural than that the Rector should welcome this opportunity of manifesting his gratitude for past favours, and of returning to Madame's son the hospitality so heartily accorded years previously to his own idoll's child?

Thus, as a natural sequence, Gaston became a frequent visitor at Westlands—a suburban Arcadia situated on the Surrey side of the river, within an hour's drive of town; and as Gaston had chambers that season at the Alexandra Hotel in the vicinity of Hyde Park-corner, with the avowed object of endeavouring to kill time and beguile the tedium of existence more successfully this side the Channel than he had of late succeeded in doing (according to his own account) across the water, it is almost superfluous to add that the thoughtless young Frenchman and the discontented, grass-widow—still scarcely more than a girl—resumed

their former intimacy with a zest which shortly ripened into absolute fervour.

Yet never until this occasion—when the arrival of Stanton's letter and the startling proposal it contained had strangely disconcerted Vivian and thrown Gaston off his guard—had De Laurnay suffered himself to be betrayed into word or deed which could justly be regarded even by the most censorious as passing that thin boundary line hedging off the sunny paths of legitimate flirtation from the arid storm-beaten plains of open impropriety; and however conscious the Frenchman may have been of the passionate longing after forbidden fruit which had sprung up of late in his own heart, it is probable that John Stanton's wife had never hitherto paused to analyse the exact emotions by which she was dominated when Gaston De Laurnay hovered dangerously near her side.

It may even be that she herself was startled and dismayed to find at this crucial moment, when she was thus hastily hidden to decide "yes or nay" respecting the most momentous issues of life, that the absolute impossibility of hiding De Laurnay an immediate and final farewell rose up before her like a living hydra—more impassable far than the boisterous billows of that broad Atlantic which interposed between her absent lord and this trembling, vacillating wife.

Yet she had been wont awhile since to bemoan John's heartless desertion of his bride in the springtide of her life, and to cherish a bitter sense of grievance in that he seemingly resigned himself all too easily to existence apart from her whom he had left to languish lonely and afar.

What then did it portend, this sudden ice-cold dread at her heart that the Rector, that Josie, that her own sense of duty and rectitude might possibly impel her to accede—no matter at what personal cost—to the terms of John Stanton's letter?

"Vivian, tell me"—it was De Laurnay who had pushed aside the bent-bowed branches with a rough and eager hand, and now flung himself heavily down upon the turf close (*how close!*) to the young wife's feet—"how did it happen that so short a time after you were wed, he—this man who has gained legal possession of you—should have left you? Left you here *triste* and lonely in your father's home, whilst he went alone across the sea?"

"I—I would not go!" she answered in a low voice, her eyes bent upon the grass.

"You would not go?—naturally! And so—"

"I will tell you all about it!" she began, hurriedly—then hesitated, for, in truth, she scarce knew how to word that tale which rounded but little to her own credit, though still less (so it seemed to her) to that of the absent John. "I suppose I was wrong—they all think so, at least—yet to me it seemed I was *right*!"

"Right—as always! Small doubt of that! Well, proceed!" in low, passionate accents from the man at her feet, who had momentarily possessed himself of her passive hand, as he gazed up into her averted face.

"Before we were married," Vivian resumed, wrestling her slender fingers from his grasp, yet not daring to meet his eyes, "John had told me he should probably be obliged to go out to South America to superintend some business arrangements about the estates he had inherited. The question was, should the wedding take place at once, or should it be indefinitely postponed until his return? I—I was not very desperately in love," she resumed with a laugh, after a brief pause, "and I told John candidly that if he went away and left me I could not answer for myself; it was not at all impossible that I—I might change my mind in his absence and decline to become Mrs. Stanton on his return. It was the truth, you know—I could not help it! I suppose Nature is answerable for having made me of such weak, vacillating clay!"

"For having invested you, I presume you

mean," De Laurnay interpolated softly, "with every charm which endears a woman to the passionate heart of man! We do not look for resolution or strength of purpose in the sex which—"

"And so John determined we should be married at once, and—nothing definite was settled, I persist, about the American trip; but John declares—and Papa and José invariably support John, no matter what absurdity he propounds!—that it was understood that if the voyage proved inevitable, I should accompany my husband to Nicaragua in due course. As though I should ever have agreed to such a monstrous notion!" she broke off indignantly, and with a swift appealing glance towards the man whose eyes never even momentarily wandered from her sweet flushed face. "Why, you know there is no one, literally *no one*, out there but nasty horrid blacks—uncivilised creatures—for ever at work upon coffee or sugar plantations. I should have been bored to death in a week—and grilled, simply grilled within a month; and then, too, does it not prove that I am right, and that such a thing was never understood?"

"I had twenty-three elegant dresses in my trousseau, and what on earth could I have done with them at Nicaragua? The notion was barbarous and absurd, I protested, yet they one and all maintained it had been 'fully understood' when we first became engaged."

"*Et! bien!*" De Laurnay questioned, as she paused, something more profound than mere transient eagerness or curiosity in his voice and eyes.

"Well! John persisted, and Papa declared that he was right! That he was altogether powerless to remain at home; yet he was considerate enough to say he would not take me out against my will! He maintained, however, to the very end, that I had not been altogether straightforward with him. In short, that he was the victim of circumstances, and that if he had really understood my determination, he would either have given me my release, or left our engagement in abeyance until his return, sooner than have married me and ultimately gone out to Nicaragua alone!"

"*Pauvre diable!*" muttered the Frenchman, under his breath in sympathetic tones—and the sympathy was genuine, although accompanied by a sneer. "In his place I would sooner far have died than have torn myself away, for such a cause, from such a bride!"

"Ha! But he is Saxon John! Saxon to the backbone, you forget! Well, you can readily understand that we—we had rather a stormy time before we parted; we both conceived ourselves aggrieved—neither of us would confess ourself in the wrong; and I must admit," she added, with one of those strange flashes of candour which constituted so contradictory and subtle a charm in a nature too complex to be termed altogether ingenuous, "that Papa and José upheld John through-out—as indeed they would do, it seems to me, if he were even proved guilty of manslaughter. And manslaughter, I presume, in this enlightened age, would be held a far greater crime than mere wreck and ruin of a woman's life!"

"*Pauvre petite!*" Gaston murmured—and the murmur, in such a tone, accompanied by such a glance, was surely tantamount to a caress; "and so he went—*as John agreed!*"

"Yes, he went, and we parted scarcely the best of friends! Three months later John wrote me he could and would return, if I, for my part, would promise to accompany him back to Nicaragua in due course; if his presence on the estates for a time should subsequently prove indispensable. And I declined! *Voula tout!* Papa and José held me little short of criminal; and John remained where he was! Our correspondence has since been of the most strained and formal nature up to the present moment, when—"

"When?" he questioned softly, as she paused again with averted eyes.

"John has melted into a perfect paroxysm

of tenderness; beseeches me to avail myself of so exceptional an opportunity of rejoining him; promises to convert daily life into a terrestrial paradise; and, in short, writes to me as a lover, rather than as a husband! Need I say more? Pah! The symptoms of all men labouring under that particular phase of temporary insanity are much the same! I may, therefore, spare myself and you the repetition of details, by simply bidding you to put yourself in his place!" and with a frolic, scornful laugh, Vivian beat a tattoo upon the back of one white-jewelled hand, with the envelope she still held listlessly between her fingers.

"Impossible! impossible!" whispered De Laurnay, with a sudden passionate quiver in his voice, which vibrated through the young wife's frame, and set her own heart beating strangely. "Do you think if you were mine any power on earth, or Heaven," he supplemented impudently, "would have power to lure or drive me from your side? Answer me, Vivian; you shall, you shall! Such pitiful justice you may at least mete out. Admit that you believe; you know that wild horses would fail to drag me one hair's breadth away if the right, the right divine were mine to lie stretched thus for ever at your feet."

"Ah! but if you were a husband the whole complexion of affairs would wear a different aspect," she answered, lightly, seeking to temporize. "Now—"

"Now I am but a *lover*!" he murmured, hoarsely—"a hopeless, miserable wretch, condemned to languish and fret and fume for the inestimable boon of one precious word or smile; which perchance is denied me after days and weeks of patience, because of a momentary caprice. *Ah! mon Dieu!* mine is, indeed, an accursed fate! Far happier he who voluntarily places the limitless ocean between himself and his wife."

"Ah! you do well to remind me of existent facts. You must go, Monsieur De Laurnay, now, at once; and I"—with an attempt to rise—"must take my letter to my father; his advice and my sister's must decide my immediate course."

"And I, oh! Vivian, how shall I live through the long, interminable hours of this night, until—I learn the truth? To-morrow before noon expect me. I shall come to learn your decision, and my fate."

"Indeed, you must not. Do you know Papa—Papa has remarked the frequency of your visits here of late, and, oh! how shall I tell you?" here Vivian clasped her hands in genuine perplexity, whilst her creamy cheek grew momentarily rosy, her eyes bright with a restless, feverish light, "questioned me as to whether I thought you cherished intentions towards Josephine; and I—I—what could I say?"

"*Ciel!*" muttered De Laurnay, under his breath, "many thanks, *bon papa*, for a brilliant idea. Rely upon my discretion, madame; but, before you go, one word, for pity's sake, one word of hope. Tell me, what shall you answer—yes or no?"

He had flung his arm about her waist, he had drawn her so close to him that his hot breath was left his lips seemed to scorch her own; and, surely—surely he could not fail to hear the loud pulsations of the heart which fluttered like a frightened bird beneath his hand.

She turned her head, she tried to speak, her cheek was blanched and cold. As her white lips parted, her eyes met his; just then all too eloquent of the anguish, misery, and passion which convulsed this innocent soul. She sought to drop her lids, she strove to avert his gaze; vainly, vainly! basilisk-wise he seemed to rivet that averted side-glance; even as physically he held her powerless to stir one hair's breadth in his iron grasp.

"Vivian—Vivian! Tell me, shall you answer yes or no?"

"Gaston, let me go! I—"

But the words died unspoken on her lips, crushed by his own; for whilst Vivian struggled to find voice, De Laurnay inclined his dark head but a hair's breadth lower, and

pressed one long, fervent, audacious kiss upon that soft, mutinous mouth, which suddenly grew rigid, colourless, and cold as stone.

She struggled like a bird, caught in the fowler's net. But when did the helpless feathered thing, once snared, ever succeed in doing aught save bruise its pinions, and ruffle its plumes in futile efforts to escape?

"Tell me, shall you go to him, or shall you stay with me?"

No answer; only her heart beat louder and louder than before. She could not move her parched tongue, she could not raise her eyes.

"Vivien, for Heaven's sake, answer me! Do you go or stay?"

"If I go?" she faltered.

"I go too; or remain but to fling myself before your eyes into those cruel waters which would soon stretch betwixt us too, even as the vessel leaves the shore."

"If I stay?"

"I swear you shall forget there is aught save joy in this weary world! Vivien, you are silent still. Shall you go or stay?"

Only a breathing space she hesitated.

"I—I cannot go!" she cried. Oh! Heaven—"

Already she was free. With one smothered ejaculation of triumphant ecstasy he released her—released her and was gone.

And Vivien, gazing blankly down at the blue envelope in her hand, was left to realise with burning blushes, bitterness, and shame, all that had happened within the last half-hour; all that the next must decide for her, influencing (as it was bound to do), for weal or woe, the whole life-time yet ahead—not for herself alone, but for more than one other, alas!

Aye, for more human souls than Vivien guessed.

CHAPTER III.

RECrimINATION AND EXPLANATION.

BUT, as Mr. Staunton had dimly foreseen, both her father and sister strongly urged Vivien to accede to so reasonable and tenderly worded a request as that which John had addressed to his contumacious wife from across wide intervening seas.

Nevertheless, she obeyed to him, in the first instance, according to his instructions, a curt but emphatic refusal, and wrote to him subsequently to the same effect, naively explaining that, upon consideration of all the circumstances attendant upon their separation, she absolutely lacked courage to journey forth to rejoin and link her lot once more with that of one whom, after eighteen long months of absence, she might, perhaps, find it difficult to regard as her husband, and view rather in the light of a friend. "You may have altered, John—so have I," she wrote, in sober earnest, despite the rallery of her tone. "We had not been altogether *en mîme*, if you remember rightly, for long months before we parted; and, to confess the truth, I am not brave enough now to cross the seas, to encounter I scarce know what or whom! You'll have to make love to me all over again, I warn you, when you do return, and if you win me—why, a second honeymoon must follow as a natural sequence and a matter of course. For my part, I can only hope we shall enjoy it better than the first—the last, that is, I mean (which is it?)—when I, for one, was considerably bored, and would have given all I was worth if, on those wide, cheerless boulevards at Paris, we could only have met a friend!"

Which was true enough, for even in those halcyon days—when the young bride, if the truth be told, was less actively happy than passively content—Vivien had ever been upon the alert for a chance *rencontre* with her quondam playmate, Gaston De Launay, with whom she had had no opportunity of renewing her acquaintance since the last "term" of those still recent "school-days," whose troubles and trials were already forgotten, whilst their fancied delights were inevitably magnified and multiplied, and invested with that tender, rose-

coloured haze, which distance invariably casts like a veil athwart the face of vanished joys, and "days departed" to return no more! Ah! cruellest of words!

This letter Josephine—to whom it was in due course submitted by her younger sister—pronounced needlessly heartless, frivolous, and undignified; the occasion was far too serious to warrant indulgence in what Miss Prior did not hesitate to stigmatise as a tone of childish levity, unworthy not alone of Vivien, but likewise insulting to the noble nature of the man whom she addressed, and who was already necessarily labouring, she bade the thoughtless young wife remember, under the effects of a crushing blow and cruellest disappointment.

"Fah!" sneered Vivien, biting the tip of her ivory penholder, as, notwithstanding Josephine's remonstrance, she folded, sealed and addressed the letter which was destined to decide the fates of at least three human lives. "John never loved me, or he would have found it impossible to leave me—still more impossible to resign himself to live apart from me for one whole, long year and a-half. Affection may be capable of such self-denial—love, never! Therein lies all the difference!" she added, with an air of infallibility.

Then Josie—usually gentle and long-suffering to a fault—turned upon her sister with flashing eyes.

"You are utterly unworthy, Vivien, I begin to fear, of the great heart which has been flung down before your feet—to use as a footstool, to spurn like a ball, to play with as you would! You deceived John shamefully before your marriage—you broke your word to him later. You tried his patience before he embarked as surely no man was ever tried before, and you ultimately parted from him with as little show of feeling as one would expect from a woman carved in stone. Your present attitude not only proves that all wifely instincts are dead within your callous breast, but you are unwomanly enough to add the wanton insult of jest to the deliberate injury you do your husband by refusing to respond to his call—a call which should surely thrill your cold heart through and through if you were not insensible as stone!"

Then Vivien slowly turned her queenly head, and regarded her sister with an expression in her glorious eyes which Josephine remembered for many a day to come.

"It's a thousand pities," she began, with a scornful laugh; "that you cannot go out to Niagara in my stead to pour the balm of consolation into poor John's aching heart. No one can accuse you, at any rate, of being 'cold' or 'insensible' where he is concerned! You did not part from him, *c'est sûr*, like a woman carved in stone. Heavens! do you remember when I entered—just one breathing space too soon—and found you in his arms? But I bore the trying spectacle manfully—*womanfully*, that is, I mean, of course—though, truth to tell, it was no unexpected revelation! I always suspected—indeed, I knew that you loved John from the first!"

Endorsing these sapient words with a quick, emphatic nod, Vivien bent her head once more, and began scribbling hieroglyphics upon her blotting paper, as though she had disposed at once and for ever of a matter altogether beneath the dignity of serious discussion.

"Vivien!" Josie hoarsely gasped, her features terribly convulsed, her very lips grown white. "Vivien, you are mad or wicked! Have a care! You scarcely know with whom you have to deal."

"Do I not?" laughed Mrs. Staunton, with a scornful elevation of her perfectly pencilled brows. "That's just where you make a fatal mistake, *très chère*. I have known, moreover, from the very first, but from motives of expediency I thought it wiser to ignore (for *all our sakes*) that my saintly sister was the *inamorata* of my husband. You loved John before ever I became his wife. Spare both yourself and me all denial, Josie. Facts speak only too plainly for themselves; and, for my part, I can but regret that you did not enjoy the

empty honour of being led by Mr. Staunton to the altar in lieu of my most unworthy self."

"Vivien, I am no saint!" Josephine retorted in a low voice, which passion rendered well-nigh inaudible, and with an expression upon her face the while which Vivien had never seen there before; "as sooner or later you may discover to your cost, for I am but mortal woman, weak and sinful, though for your sake, and—yes, why should I not confess the truth!—for *his*, I have striven, I have struggled, I have prayed for courage to suffer and be strong. There was a time when John Staunton was—was dearer far to me than my own life; but when he came to me to tell me that you—*you*, frivolous, shallow-pated, all-unworthy as you were—had won his great and noble heart, from that moment, Vivien, I strove (as surely woman never strove before) to trample down that sweet pale blossom of love which had sprung up in my breast; and when he asked me—seeing that you loved him not—whether he should persevere in his endeavours to win you, or resign all thought of you for ever, I—albeit my own heart at that time was breaking, Vivien—I bade him hope on, hope ever, and myself sang his praises incessantly in your ears."

"Ten thousand pities that you did not spare yourself so unnecessary an exertion!" Vivien interrupted, with a scornful laugh. "On your head and my father's be all the responsibility of this—this most wretched marriage! You talked, coaxed, persuaded me into giving my hand to John Staunton—I say my 'hand' advisedly, for he never won my heart."

"It may be that in truth I erred through excess of affectionate zeal," Josephine responded sadly—the passionate tremor had already died out of her voice; the fierce light was quenched in her eyes, though her sweet face was paler, sterner than Vivien ever remembered it before.

"For I knew how—how weak and pitiful a creature you were at heart, Vivien; influenced by a look, swayed by an admiring word; and I longed, I prayed to see you at safe anchor upon the haven of a true and loyal heart. I held—I still hold—John Staunton as the noblest of his sex. I thought if he won your hand your lifelong happiness was ensured, that you must be blessed for evermore, far—far beyond your actual deserts—aye! as mortal woman is seldom blessed in this weary world, where, Heaven help us! broken hearts and blighted hopes it seems to me prove less the exception than the rule."

She paused; momentarily overcome, perhaps, by the recollections and associations her own torrent of words evoked; paused, covering her eyes with her clasped hands, and slowly rocking herself backwards and forwards in a sudden paroxysm of despairing grief.

Vivien meanwhile gazed spellbound and entranced at the sister whom she had hitherto regarded (from the supreme altitudes of an acknowledged beauty, who had broken hearts in her schooldays, and had homage laid at her feet almost as soon as she ran alone) with something of contemptuous compassion, as a creature doomed to exist upon the coarse, unpalatable fare of daily life, without the vaguest experience of the *soie sauce piquante* which served to give the dish a pungent flavour, an appetising aroma, according to the tenets the spoiled and flattered fair one held.

Was it possible that Josephine had thus loved? Nay, loved it might be even yet! Vivien herself was fretfully conscious that, despite the boast of many conquests, the undoubted prowess in Cupid's lists which she had shown upon social battle fields, and that supremacy which had long since tacitly been accorded her, as a woman whose smile was fatal to a rival, whose innocent wiles were pronounced resistless by the sterner sex, the deepest depths of her own heart yet remained unstirred, the real Prince Charming who should rouse such love and passionate longing as she yearned to feel had not yet crossed her path.

She ardently longed, moreover, to be awakened from the lethargy in which it seemed to her

her senses were wrapped and steeped. True a dangerous "something" had leapt and thrilled through her every vein, beneath the magic of Gaston's unlicensed kiss; still, still there must be some profounder depths of joy which she longed almost feverishly to fathom, she scarce cared at what cost.

Poor frail, tremulous butterfly! whom too rough a grasp would suffice to bruise and crush, in a single moment, and for ever, out of all similitude, to that thing of joy and beauty which Vivien assuredly represented in the flesh—useless, purposeless, as was her life, her being, to others not less than to herself.

And Josephine—sober, saintly Josephine—knew then the meaning of passionate love! had sounded life's deepest depths, it seemed; whilst she, Vivien, had forfeited her liberty, resigned youth's rich inheritance of vague and boundless possibilities, of shadowy rose-coloured hopes, only to—

A dull throb of something akin to envy shot through the young wife's heart, gazing at that unselfish sister who at three-and-twenty was yet unwedded—unwon. The girl who had ruthlessly trampled her own desires under foot, and shut out from her life the one streak of dawning brightness, which, diverted from its primary object, might perchance have shed its warm rays in full splendour round about herself, in order that another might bask for ever in the radiant sunshine of a loyal heart's undivided love.

She had cast possibilities for herself aside, in order to ensure for Vivien what Josephine herself held the highest prize to which woman might aspire, the fullest cup of earthly bliss from which mortal lips, however blessed, might be privileged to sip.

Ha! how she herself had thirsted, famished! How grateful she would have proved for the merest drippings from that overflowing beaker which had been held on bended knees up to Vivien's scornful lips, only to be thrust aside by her and wantonly trampled under foot!

"Ha! I see it all now!" Mrs. Staunton said aloud, speaking in the low, slow tones of a woman who weighs every word before she gives it voice. "You have been devoted to John's interest from the very first. You admit you did your best to aid him in gaining his heart's desire, regardless of the cost. And now, because he, forsooth, desires a white face by his side, you would drive me forth to banishment, to misery, perhaps to death! You would plead, urge, entreat, insist that I should leave England, home and friends—everything I care for in the world—not from sisterly regard for my interests, but all for love of John! The destinies of nations should be arranged, you seem to think, in accordance with his caprice! A creditable confession, truly! Miserable sinner, erring mortal, as I am, I can scarcely congratulate myself upon the possession of such a saintly sister!"

She threw back her shapely head and burst into a harsh peal of discordant laughter—mocking, scornful, bitter, but strangely lacking the ring of mirth.

It sufficed, however, to startle Josephine back into composure. She withdrew her hands from before her face, she drew herself up to her full height—shivering faintly; then she confronted Vivien calmly, coldly, with a dull defiant spark gleaming in her eyes.

"I wished you to rejoice your husband," she explained icily, "because I held it better so—for you, not less than him. Since the moment that you gave your promise to become John Staunton's wife, I take Heaven as my witness I have never harboured one thought of him, save as the husband of my sister—that sister who has proved herself signally unworthy of the name she bears, unworthy to share his life!"

Before Vivien could reply the door was flung wide open and servant ushered in two visitors—Gaston De Laurnay and Sir Archibald Hope, a lively young baronet, whose "place" was situated within a few miles of Westlands, and who had been presented to its

inmates by their mutual friend, "the Mounseer"—as it delighted "Archie" to style "a fellow whose only fault consisted in the fact that he was hatched the wrong side of the Channel—denced hard lines for him, that!"

It was Miss Prior's afternoon "At Home" so it would have been hardly feasible for either of the ladies to have denied themselves to their guests; the intrusion, too, was not altogether *mal à propos*, for it terminated informally a painful scene which neither of the sisters would otherwise have known how to draw to a fitting close. As it was, however, they strolled out naturally enough through the low, wide open windows conducting on to the velvet lawn; for the afternoon was delicious, and earth was just then sweet and radiant with the odours and the blossoms and the myriad joys of June.

Parker had already spread the five o'clock tea-table under the shady branches of "the young ladies'" favourite elm, and whilst Josephine brewed the fragrant decoction in the Japanese teapot out of the silver urn, De Laurnay was deputed to "bruiise" the great "Queen" strawberries with cream and sugar in sparkling out-glass ice-plates—the very gleam of which was signally refreshing, and made one feel cool and reinvigorated on such an afternoon.

Meanwhile Vivien strolled to and fro, over the newly-mown lawn in the sunshine, with Sir Archibald Hope by her side. The music of their voices, and mingled laughter was wafted by the summer breeze to the ears of those beneath the tree; for Mrs. Staunton was chattering with even more than her wonted volubility, swaying this way and that (like a queenly lily on its slender stem), as she enforced her argument with the faintest possible gesticulation, which lent her words and movements something of airy, foreign grace.

And during the many summer days which followed, it was almost ever thus—De Laurnay whispering sugared nothings with his most impressive and obsequious air into Miss Prior's ear; whilst Sir Archie hovered by Vivien's side, even though it might be in the direction of Josephine that his swift, sidelong glances winged their way—winged their way, and—lingered.

And Gaston De Laurnay was all content, for Mrs. Staunton had kept her promise. Whilst John languished, heartsick and lonely, on the other side the broad Atlantic, she kept the vow so briefly pledged, responsive to the wily Frenchman's impassioned, whispered,—

"Stay!"
"For a while this much must suffice," he argued; "yet only for a while!"

CHAPTER IV.

PERIL.

"WHERE is your sister, mademoiselle?"

The speaker was De Laurnay, who had been unceremoniously ushered into the pretty breakfast-room at Westlands, one bright September morning, where Josephine sat alone, her head bent over her fancy work, a smile of unutterable content upon her lips.

"Vivien has driven into town with my father," she responded, blithely; "but you must remain to luncheon and await their return. There is joyous anticipation in the very air, monsieur. Surely you perceive its delicate aroma? But I shall leave Vivien to impart the glad tidings herself."

Josephine spoke unreservedly, and with a bright smile upon her lips. Gaston had played his part so well during the summer weeks just sped that Miss Prior (and all onlookers at the game) had net unnaturally concluded she herself was the attraction which lured the Frenchman all too often to the Rectory.

It would be too much to say, perhaps, that she reciprocated this supposed attachment, but she had, at any rate, brought herself to receive in a kindly spirit his ostentatiously open attentions; for she had told herself that

an alliance with a man of assured position ample means, and no few personal advantages could scarcely fail to be productive of happiness and content.

Josephine knew herself to be in possession of a well-organized mind and temperament, and having once passed through the fiery ordeal of passion and stamped out every lingering latent spark, nought remained for her, she argued, but to accept the offer of some honourable, true-hearted man, and trust that, once she had given the promise to become the wife of such an one, her heart would incline like a young twig bent in the right direction.

Gaston was a favourite both with the Rector and her sister—all sufficient reasons, surely, why Josephine should have responded graciously hitherto to his overtures to win her favour, his ostentatious endeavour to please; but to-day there was a far less impersonal cause for the warmth of welcome she accorded him.

If so be that the gallant Frenchman, finding time and opportunity propitious, should choose this occasion to plead his cause and press his suit, why, Josephine reflected, with a nervous throbbing at her heart, she would incline a willing ear to his tale of love, and plight her troth, and place her hand, well pleased and fearlessly, in his; rejoicing, too, that it had happened thus, for reasons too complex to be stated.

"Why keep me in suspense until your sister's return?" De Laurnay questioned with an impatient laugh, as he flung his gloves into his hat, and subsided into a low chair opposite the girl. "The 'glad tidings' will not be less welcome from your lips than hers; and if—as I presume—they concern one or both of you, they can hardly fail to be of interest to me!"

"I believe that!" Josephine, responded, heartily, dropping her work and clasping her hands ecstatically in the fulness of her joy. "Well, Vivien had letters from Nicaragua this morning; and John—my brother-in-law—hopes to be with us, at latest, in a few days. He would start—"

"*Mon Dieu!*" escaped De Laurnay's athen lips, and, all involuntarily—nay, unconsciously it seemed—he sprang, trembling, to his feet.

"Monsieur De Laurnay! Gaston—"

"Is—Is this thing true? Do not jest with me, Josephine, do not attempt to temporise! Is it true, that—that he is homeward bound?"

"Quite true! And, pardon my observing that I am at a loss to conceive how—"

"*Ciel!*" he interrupted hoarsely, passing his hand across his livid brow like a man awaking from some hideous dream, "it—it cannot be! Impossible! And—and where is Vivien now?"

"I have already informed you," Josephine retorted, coldly, "that Mrs. Staunton has gone up to town with her father, and—"

"Ah! you will think me mad, no doubt! And so I am! But—indeed, I cannot stay one moment longer! Pardon me, and—adieu!"

And, suiting the action to the word, Gaston snatched up his hat and escaped from the room before Josephine had recovered from her amaze, or regained sufficient self-possession even to attempt to detain him.

She remained speechless, spell-bound, and immovable, just as he had left her, too dazed and stunned even to reflect—like a woman paralysed or petrified, whilst the moments crept away.

Thus Vivien found her a full hour later, when she entered, hat in hand. Then, glancing up for the first time, Josephine noted how blanched and haggard, weary, worn, and wan was her sister's usually lovely, radiant face.

"Gaston has been here, Parker tells me," she began at once, turning towards Josephine, and flinging her cloak aside, "asking for me! Did you tell him—tell him that—?"

"Yes—I told him, Vivien."

"And—and what on earth did he say?"

She scarce made an effort, so it seemed, to repress the breathless eagerness of her tone, as white-lipped, wide-eyed, she gazed fever-

ably at her sister, as though in her impatience she could almost tear from her throat the answer which Josephine hesitated how to frame.

"He said—Oh! Vivien, what *is* it?" she cried at length, in frenzied tones, clasping her hands despairingly, and returning Vivien's gaze with sudden, voiceless anguish frozen in her eyes. "He said—Oh! surely I have been dreaming! It cannot, cannot be! It was some hideous nightmare, from which I shall presently awaken—awake in time to see you safely clasped in the haven of your husband's arms. Oh! Vivien, why do you stare like that? Why—why no single reassuring word? Tell me that—that I have been dreaming! that it is not—was not true!"

"I know not of what you are raving!" Vivien returned, with impatient scorn, as she started up from the couch on which she had flung herself with a weary sigh, and began pacing restlessly, like a caged but tameless creature, to and fro—alternately pushing the furniture out of her path with her gentle hand, then interlacing her white fingers despairingly in a hopeless, ineffectual effort to school and restrain herself. "I—I only know that John is homeward bound; and, oh! Heaven! I would sooner jump into a yawning grave, than to be condemned to sit still here awaiting his return!"

"Vivien! you are mad!"
"Ah! yes; and *bad* as well, no doubt, according to your saintly creed! I am but a poor dissembler at the best, and now—now I no longer care even to attempt to deceive you, others, or myself! I *loathe* the thought of John's return! I—I would sooner *die*, it seems to me, than resume my lifelong duties as—his wife!"

"Vivien!" Josephine fairly wailed, and into that one word seemed compressed all the anguish, horror, and reproach to which the human voice could give utterance—all that language could express.

"Ah! it is true!" cried Vivien, flinging her shapely arms aloft, then clasping her hands behind her head. "I—moreover, I *do* not meet him! Oh! Heaven be merciful—what shall I—can I do?"

"*Does* not meet him? What *do* you mean? Oh! Vivien, for Heaven's sake, calm yourself, be rational, unsay those terrible words! Surely you have not reflected what they mean!"

"Does one reflect when one is half distraught?—Weigh words when one is mad?" Vivien echoed, wildly. "No words in the English tongue, it seems to me, could justly convey what I mean—what I feel—or the thing I shall soon *do*! For I—I must make good my escape, Josie. Ah! it is useless staring at me like that! I know not, care not, how, when, or where, only I—I must, I will hide myself in the furthestmost corner of the earth, rather than await John's return—rather than meet his eyes!"

"But why? Wherefore? Explain! explain! Surely he has not reproached you—threatened you? He knows no cause for dissatisfaction."

"Worse than that! He overwhelms me with protestations of undying affection—a man who could leave me for almost two years! He says my letter of refusal to join him was so naïve, so candid, so pathetic. He understood so well what I meant; he appreciated so entirely my—my ingenuousness, that although he dared not say one word to me until he had succeeded in effecting arrangements, yet from the moment my letter reached him he made up his mind to rejoice me in England at any cost. And—oh! endless trouble to the same effect! Fancy, having to bear being 'made love' to over again, by a husband who has deserted one for half a lifetime, and who will be two years older, uglier, more staid than when he said good-bye! He will speak like a Yankee, and dress like a boor. Oh! heavens, what shall I—can I do?"

"This is mere childishness, Vivien!" returned Josephine, coldly, momentarily re-

assured; for, after all, as she hastily reflected, the situation scarcely rose to the dignity of tragedy, if her sister's mind could descend to the consideration of such trivialities as these. "Where is papa? You have not pained him, I trust, by a word of all this?"

"Papa? papa? Oh! I left him at Esher. As we were driving home we met Mr. Gascoigne, who wanted papa to inspect a newly-purchased mare, and—"

"Well, Vivien?" sternly, for Miss Prior perceived her sister's thoughts had already wandered off from the subject under discussion.

"Eh? Oh! Gascoigne offered him a mount, and they arranged to ride down to Westlands together; at least, I think so. I don't remember clearly, only—papa, I know, said he should be home before I could arrive with the carriage. Something about lunch, too; but—*really* I forget," and Vivien raised her hand to her head with a gesture of weariness and bewilderment infinitely pathetic.

At that very moment Parker entered with a scared and terrified expression upon her homely features. The groom from Sannyside had ridden across the green in hot haste to say, "Would Miss Prior please to go at once, as the Recter had been taken ill!"

"Ill?" Josephine echoed, blankly, momentarily stupefied; then as a sudden inspiration flashed across her, "Throw!" she cried, wildly, "throw, no doubt! You said, Vivien, did you not, that Gascoigne had offered papa a mount?"

But without waiting for her sister's rejoinder Josephine caught up an old hat which chanced to lay on a jardinière with her gardening scissors and basket, and pushing past Parker with scant ceremony, flew out of the room, down the hall, and was across the garden and making for the green almost before the bewildered handmaiden had recovered her breath.

"You, Gaston!—you?"
"Yes, Vivien! It is I myself! Did you conceive it possible I should remain long absent when—when I had seen your sister and heard the truth? Did she not tell you I had been?"

"Yes, she told me. Oh! pity me! Gaston, you see before you the most miserable woman upon earth!"

"Ah! Vivien, *signon!* say those words again. They whisper of joy and hope to me, despite the tears in your radiant eyes—the anguish of your tone!"

Mrs. Staunton had sprung hastily to her feet as De Launay bounded in from the garden, unannounced, through the open window; and this breathless dialogue had been carried on between them whilst they stood facing one another, close together, yet far apart, for the Frenchman had not even dared advance his hand to grasp the girl's in conventional greeting; whilst Vivien, conscious-stricken and amazed, had all involuntarily recoiled, scarce venturing even to meet his eyes, albeit she stood spellbound, motionless, as though rooted to the spot.

But as his last words died away in a whisper, Gaston flung one arm about her, and bent his head close to her ear; though even then he did not dare draw her to a close embrace, or fold her to his heart.

She started from his side aghast. She had long known his secret, as he no doubt guessed hers.

Yet since that ever memorable June morning when beneath the trees she had incautiously discussed with him the expediency of acceding to or refusing her absent lord's request, no word had passed between them of an absolutely criminal nature—their guilty love had been tacitly understood, never openly confessed!

Yet what indeed remained to be said after Gaston De Launay had dared to press unlicensed kisses—unreproved—upon Vivien's glowing lips?

Of what avail subsequent protest or rebuke,

explanation or expostulation, once caresses (which were profanation) had been tendered by the lawless Frenchman and passively accepted by John Staunton's erring wife?

After that, little indeed remained which words were needed to express.

Vivien had long, and too fully, realized Gaston's passionate, misplaced love for herself; whilst, for her own part, up to the present moment she had scarcely known what term to apply to that baneful, unwholesome sentiment which had sprung up like some rank, noisome weed within her own restless, dissatisfied heart.

Yet both alike had been careful to enshew word or look, or deed, which might serve to remind the other of that unwelcome, unpardonable episode which one at least of the guilty twain strove vainly to forget; yet as the summer days stole all too fleetly by, and the roses faded, and midsummer joys declined only to give place to September glories, Vivien realized that for her daily life had lost that terrible *élan* by which she had erewhile been consumed; whilst for Gaston De Launay existence was once more endowed with that *gigante* flavour apart from which he, like many another of his compatriots, voted "life unendurable."

Until now, however, no word had passed the lips of either (since that crucial moment when Vivien had been so suddenly called upon to decide a question involving, as it seemed to her, her whole lifelong fate) directly crimping either one or the other of the pair, who yet each secretly acknowledged him or herself deeply erring, and held the other scarce less guilty on the same count.

But in an emergency so startling and so unexpected as the present, prudence, reticence, and subterfuge were flung broadcast to the winds, each faced the naked truth at this perilous moment. Vivien realising that she lacked strength and courage to meet the husband she had tacitly deceived—De Launay aghast to find that for him life would be a dreary void, a mere purposeless routine, once that mythical John Staunton—who thus far had but vaguely disturbed his peace—should become a tangible reality in lieu of a shadowy rival, and take his legitimate place in the flesh, by the side of Vivien—his wife!

Yet even so, Vivien scarcely knew what she feared to lose—whilst Gaston trembled to put into words all that he longed to gain!

"Your words whisper of hope to me!" he said, and then stood silent, gazing at her; for Vivien had fled from his encircling arm and stood cowering opposite, like a guilty creature, in an angle of the wall—her face covered by both her hands, shame, despair, humiliation, like so many demons, contending for the mastery within her breast.

A quick "rat-tat" upon the rectory knocker startled them both back into momentary composure; and only just in time, for Parker entered, but a second later, bearing a telegram upon a silver salver, which she handed to Mrs. Staunton, murmuring briefly,—

"For you, ma'am."

At the sight of the orange-coloured envelope an ice-cold hand seemed to close about the heart of that conscience-stricken wife.

She dropped into the nearest chair before she tore it open; one hurried glance, and then the thin pink paper fluttered from her nerveless fingers, whilst her white lips parted with a moan.

"Oh, Heaven!" she wailed, "have mercy! help me! Courage fails me! I—I am utterly undone!"

"Vivien! speak to me!" Gaston implored, in low, hoarse tones, which passion rendered well-nigh inaudible even to his own ear; and as he spoke, half-unconsciously, perhaps, he dropped on one knee beside her, and passed his arm about that trembling form, bringing his face on a level with her own.

The wretched, misguided girl felt almost grateful for that momentary support—De Launay's arm appeared strong and helpful, and a momentary yearning was upon her to lay her weary, aching head down upon the

haven of his breast, which seemed at least to promise rest, security and peace; unutterably precious pledges these to the poor stumbling, floundering soul, tempest-tossed and passion-racked.

"What does it say? It is from—him?"
"Yes! He telegraphed from Liverpool: he may be here at any moment. Heaven only knows how soon! He has deceived me!" she cried, wildly, starting to her feet. "No matter what his motive, he is as culpable as I! He had sailed before his letter left—he entrusted it to a friend to post when the *Orion* was safely under weigh to 'surprise' us, as he says! And he—*I*—Ah! what's the use of talking? Words avail but little now!"

She clasped her hands in a transport of frenzy; she pined to and fro like a creature possessed. One moment she raised appealing eyes to heaven; the next she fixed them—all involuntarily—in mute entreaty upon De Laurnay's blanched and terribly contorted face.

"*Mon Dieu!*" escaped his livid lips, and then he stood for one long moment paralysed—glaring speechless and immovable at the woman whom he loved.

"Vivien! what shall you do? Stay here to meet him, or—"

"*I dare not!*" she interrupted wildly. "You don't know John—so stern, so rigid—and, oh, to have to endure protestations, caresses, and honeyed words from lips one has ceased to love! Ah, if I, indeed, am guilty—as I can no longer doubt—well, an all-sufficient punishment has already overtaken me. Here on earth I shall have expiated, and I can but humbly hope and pray I may be held ceaseless, blameless up above; for when I lay the life-long burden down at last surely I shall have atoned! Oh, how gladly would I resign life itself rather than meet John Staunton's eyes!"

"That is not the sole alternative, Vivien! There is a way—oh, how easy!—of avoiding all you fear! Vivien, Vivien! you need no empty words to tell you how dear—how unutterably dear you are to me! Fly with me, dearest—now, this moment—and I swear that life henceforth shall be for you but one long rose-coloured dream! Paris, Italy—where you will—we will build our bower of bliss; Earth will be Paradise—existence uninterrupted joy, if we share it together, thus—thus!"

He had wound his arms about her, he had drawn her to his breast; her heart was fluttering against his own as he caressed her hair, her eyes, her lips.

Vivien moaned like a thing in pain, yet she made no effort to release herself from the heaven of that embrace. Storm-beaten, rudderless as a frail barge tossing on a raging sea, she was grateful at that perilous moment to find any rock to lean against; albeit against that self-same treacherous rock, soon or later, her life's barge must surely drift to wreck!

"Come with me, darling—now, this moment!" Gaston continued, in a frenzied whisper, drawing her closer to his heart. "My phæton stands without in the road, and not a second need be lost! In truth, the danger even now may be nearer than we think! Listen to me, Vivien: there lies your hat and cloak. Throw them on; jump into the trap, and drive quickly up to town: I will take the train to Victoria, and go straight to the Alexandra Hotel. I shall get in long before you, and shall have effected all arrangements for—your comfort long before you arrive. We'll catch the tidal train; *mignon*, and cross to Calais tonight. Then—then let John Staunton, or any other, catch us if they can!"

"Oh, no—so wrong, so wrong!" she wailed incoherently, yet clinging in her despair but the more tightly to his breast. "Oh, Gaston, Gaston, you know not what you ask! I—I should be ruined—ruined—wrecked for life, and—"

"And if you stay—what then, Vivien? Bound to a log, a thing of stone, for ever! Which fate is preferable? Life and love with me, or existence as John Staunton's wife?"

How will you meet him? What shall you say when he holds you thus, and presses kisses thus, *thus* on your trembling lips? Will you think, *mignon*, of—"

"Ah! I cannot bear it! I dare not risk it!" she cried, shuddering uncontrollably. "Gaston, save me, save me from such a fate! I am yours, to do with what you will—if only you can rescue me from a life ten thousand times worse than death!"

How she answered her matters little. In another moment both were gone!

CHAPTER V.

A CRUEL WELCOME.

"I HARDLY know the full extent of the danger; but his injuries are serious, I fear. Dr. Phillips declines to pronounce judgment definitely, so I have telegraphed to London for further advice. Sit down, Sir Archie, and—Josephine laid her hand upon the bell as she spoke—"oh! I shall not hesitate to avail myself of your services, I assure you!"

she continued, cutting short the young baronet's fervent offers of assistance, "if I find you can be of use. Parker"—as the servant entered with a note upon a tray—"where is Mrs. Staunton? Tell her I've returned, and— Well, girl, what's the matter now?" she questioned, sharply, noting that Parker looked white and scared, and stared at her young mistress as though she had seen a ghost.

"Oh! please, miss, Mrs. Staunton, this note's from her, miss; she bid me give it you, at once, and—"

"A note from Vivien!" Josephine snatched it with a trembling hand. "Has she gone out then? And—"

"Please, miss, she—Mrs. Staunton—drove away in Mounseer's carriage! I—I see'd her going myself."

"Gracious heavens! His!" with a desperate effort, recovering self-possession, "yes, of course, I—I remember now. That will do, Parker; you—you may go. Did you understand the girl? At once!"

But, even as the door closed, and she broke the seal of the envelope, poor Josephine's self-control deserted her, and she sank down upon the nearest chair, moaning, gasping, like a creature wounded unto death.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Prior!" cried Sir Archie, springing to her side, "what's the matter? What does all this mean? May I—shall I read the note?"

Josephine faintly nodded assent. She was for the moment completely crushed and stunned by the extent of the calamities which seemed to have overtaken her thick and fast as hailstones upon a winter night.

The envelope contained John's telegram; and a few hasty lines of explanation, scrawled in pencil by Vivien's trembling hand—"I dare not stay to face John, and so I go. For pity's sake, do not pursue me; it would be useless. And, believe me, I will be happier far all that he and I should never meet again!"

"She is mad!" cried Josephine, in low, frenzied tones, starting to her feet; "we must overtake her without instant delay, and endeavour to bring her back to her senses before it is too late! Oh! Sir Archie, you perhaps can help me; this is, in any case, no moment for concealment. Moreover, on your friendship and discretion I feel I may rely. It is with Gaston De Laurnay my sister has fled. Oh! counsel me what steps to take, before—before John returns, to find his home desolate!"

"De Laurnay? never!" cried Sir Archie, paling somewhat beneath his mask of summer tan. "I—I saw him at the station as I came through. He was just jumping into the train for Victoria; and, thank Heaven, I can assure he was alone!"

"He!" One moment Josephine drew breath more freely, only to shudder uncontrollably, however, the next. "Rubbish! Rubbish! hopes!" she cried, mournfully; "it is part of their plan. They could scarcely be so shameless

as to leave Westlands together; to every tramp they passed along the road their names and faces would be familiar! They have both made for town, you see; but by different routes. For Heaven's sake, Sir Archie, suggest something, anything, what plan you will, so only that we can arrest them before they cross to-night! For, without doubt, that is Gaston's plan; he will take her straight to Paris, and—"

"Humph! probably enough! Well, all I can say, my dear Miss Prior, is, that everything that mortal man can do, rely upon it, shall be done! There is no time to waste now in reflection. One step is obvious—I must make for Victoria myself at once, and en route I shall have ample leisure to mature my plans. I'm off forthwith, without a second's delay! And directly I gain news of them I'll wire, you may be sure! I'll catch up Gaston, never fear; they won't start before the tidal train, and—well! I'll get hold of a clue somehow, and put a stop to his dastardly, villainous game!"

"Ah! I know you will do all that's possible!" Josephine cried, in grateful tones, extending both her trembling hands, which were warmly clasped by the excited baronet. "I need scarcely remind you of all that hangs in the balance; more than life or death is involved for her! Her whom we one and all hold so—so unutterably dear!"

"All that human efforts may accomplish shall be effected, my dear Miss Prior, rest assured! To serve you, I believe me, I would journey barefoot to the Land's End!"

There was something in his voice and eyes just then, as he held her hands and gazed into her face, which startled Josephine, even at that fateful moment; for, truth to tell, she had always regarded Sir Archie as one of the most respectful, but most hopelessly infatuated victims of her sister's fascinations. Why else had he haunted Westlands so persistently during the summer months just sped? Why—ah! could it be? no, never.

Yet this was no moment to indulge in abstract speculations, only—only her face grew flushed and warm, her heart beat thick and fast; one word of thanks she whispered breathlessly, then Sir Archie, wrung her hands in leave-taking, and vanished like a lightning flash.

But even then Josephine dared not pause to reflect upon the complex and bewildering elements of the "situation." She rang at once for Parker, and with the utmost self-possession (mindful of the necessity of hiding any suspicions which her own discomposure upon receipt of Vivien's note, coupled with the fact of Mrs. Staunton's flight, had without doubt awakened) gave directions as to the preparation of the Rector's room, for the immediate reception of the sufferer; for Mr. Prior, though badly injured, insisted on being removed from Sunnyside (opposite whose hospitable portals he had been thrown by his friend's mare, as Josephine had surmised) as soon as arrangements could be effected for his transfer, with due regard to prudence.

"And Mrs. Staunton, Miss?" Parker questioned, determined to improve the occasion—"if she comes back whilst you are out, shall I—will she—?"

"Eh? oh! Mrs. Staunton's return is—quite uncertain. There has been a telegram, by the way, to say Mr. Staunton may arrive to-day—indeed, at any moment; and—my sister has driven off to—meet him; though it is very possible she will miss him upon the road! So—what are you staring at, Parker? I look ill?—no doubt! This has been a terribly trying day—the Rector's accident, and—and the weather. There! you may go now! I—I have nothing more to say!" and as the girl—mystified, curious, and only partially enlightened—reluctantly withdrew, Josephine flung herself with a groan upon the couch, pushing her hair back from her brow, like a woman half distraught.

And no wonder! Surely in all the life ahead she never might forget the tragic

incidents which had crowded into this one day, as thickly as though the flying minutes had been slowly passing years!

She stooped to pick up John Staunton's telegram, which had fluttered to the ground; then she opened and perused once more Vivien's hasty, pencilled scrawl. As she bent over it (her throbbing head, with a still more aching heart) the parlour door was again flung wide open; and before she could realise what had happened, John himself bounded forward and clasped her eagerly in his arms.

"Josephine!"

"John!"

"And Vivien absent? The girl tells me she has gone to meet me—impossible! I should have seen her at the station, or passed her on the road. Josie! for Heaven's sake what does your scared face mean? Why are your lips white?—your limbs trembling?—why?"

"Papa—there has been an accident you know—did they not tell you?" Josephine faltered incoherently; gazing with terrified eyes up into John's sunburnt face. But prevarication or evasion were alike foreign to her candid nature; her lips quivered painfully, a guilty flush stole momentarily to her ashen cheeks. It was impossible to mistake her obvious embarrassment and terror, though, even whilst she spoke, she made a clumsy effort to crush the tell-tale telegram and the letter she still held into the pocket of her dress.

"Josephine!" John cried, bewildered and alarmed. "You—you are concealing something from me!—tell me the truth at once. Let me know the worst—I can bear it better than this intolerable agony of suspense! Where, in Heaven's name, where has Vivien gone!"

"Oh! John?" she wailed; "John——"

But his eye had lighted upon the pencilled paper; he snatched it ruthlessly from her hand.

"Gone!—gone! Great heavens! Josephine—it cannot, cannot be? Gone—fled?—away from me! With whom, then?—name him, that I may wring his neck! Speak, or by Heaven I—I shall shake the words out of your throat!"

Unconsciously, in his frenzy he suited the action to the word. He had seized her ungently by the arm; he held her as in a vice; his face was livid, his eyes ablaze. Glancing up one moment Josephine shivered, cowering and covering her face in her hands like a guilty conscience-stricken thing.

"With—Gaston De Laurnay!" at length she gasped. "Oh! John, be calm and listen——"

"Listen?" he echoed like a maniac, hurling her so roughly from him that she stumbled and almost fell. "Woman! this, then, is how you keep your promise! Remember, I—I trusted her to you! I believed that you would guard her as jealously as your own life!"

"And I—oh! John, be just, be merciful! I—Heaven knows I did my best!"

And with these broken words she fell on her knees. Endurance suddenly deserted her; she covered her white face with both cold, trembling hands, and sobbed as though her heart must surely break.

Alan, poor Josephine! Alas, poor John! 'Twas, indeed, a sad home-coming.

CHAPTER VI.

SAVED.

REFLECTION during his brief journey up to town decided Sir Archibald to proceed at once to the Alexandra Hotel. His supposition that Gaston De Laurnay would be found at his rooms proved but too correct, although it was not without considerable difficulty that the baronet succeeded in gaining admission to his friend's presence, or, in other words, in forcing his way to the familiar suite of rooms, despite the remonstrance of the Frenchman's valet, who protested finally (with true Hibernian emphasis) that "his master was not at home, indeed, he wasn't to anyone but a lady! So

would Sir Archibald just be good enough to understand plain Henglish once for all, else there'd be a deuce of a row, he could tell him, of which he'd have to bear the brunt!"

And Sir Archibald finally demonstrated his comprehension of the vernacular, by making his way upstairs in spite of Cerberus, and unceremoniously bursting in upon Gaston unannounced.

"Knew I'd find you here, dear boy, although your fellow swore point-blank that you were out!" the Baronet began, wringing his friend's hand, although De Laurnay made no attempt to rise from before his *escritoire*, nor did he ask his visitor to take a seat. "Hallo!" glancing round, and taking note of the travelling impediments with which the room was strewn. "Gladstone bag, rugs, hat-box! Where on earth are you off to? Anything in the wind?"

De Laurnay essayed a yawn, but failed signally in the attempt; still he stretched himself with a languid air, and answered with as much indifference as he could command.—

"Nothing much. I've had intelligence from Paris which will take me over for a day or two. I hope to catch the tidal train, by the way, and so—as I've an appointment presently—you won't mind my suggesting, my dear boy, that you should say what you have to say at once, and then be so obliging as to take yourself off—sharp!"

"Ha! just so. Certainly, of course!" returned Sir Archibald, flinging himself into the depths of a luxurious armchair even as he spoke, and producing a cigarette case as he glanced about for a match. "It's not five o'clock yet, don't you know, so you have heaps of time. Boat can't possibly start before midnight; train goes, I think, a quarter before nine!"

"You're very much mistaken. I shall be off from here in less than an hour. And, moreover, I've an appointment, as I think I told you, between this and then. As a gentleman, you will understand me; I need say no more, I'm sure!"

De Laurnay's embarrassment and preoccupation were obvious; during the course of this brief dialogue he was engaged in opening and looking drawers, stuffing papers into his travelling bag, tearing up letters, scribbling notes, filling up cheques to settle an array of "little accounts" spread open before him on his desk; and ever and again he glanced nervously at the clock. He was pale as ashes, and it appeared to Sir Archibald that his long, thin hand shook slightly as he grasped the slender quill.

Truth to tell, the baronet, for his own part, was becoming painfully anxious now. He glanced furtively towards the timepiece upon the mantel, and began to wonder uneasily "why the deuce the thing hung fire so?"—if his little ruse should fail to come off properly, after all!—but this was a contingency involving issues too momentous to be calmly contemplated even for a moment; so Sir Archibald endeavoured to banish the notion of any such possibility, and began to exercise his ingenuity in a vain attempt to invent some plausible pretext which should enable him to persist in lingering in his friend's rooms, despite De Laurnay's polite intimation that, "as a gentleman," he would do well to clear out!

He was so far driven "on to his beam-ends," however, as he himself would have expressed it, that he had risen to his feet, and—arranging his moustache the while with elaborate care—began explaining, that "perhaps after all—don't you know! as—or! Gaston appeared pressed for time—in a terrible hurry, in fact; and he—well he himself had no end of a lot to say (little difficulty, respecting which he had desired the benefit of De Laurnay's advice). Perhaps, after all, it would be better to defer a—a somewhat ticklish discussion, until—er! well, till Gaston got back again, as—well! he supposed he did mean to return some time, eh? Not decamping for good and all—or bad and all, old fellow, eh?"

To this point-blank question, however,

Gaston De Laurnay returned a somewhat ambiguous reply. He had every hope of meeting his friend soon again, though at present it was quite impossible to state definitely when he should be back again. Meanwhile any communication with which Sir Archibald might favour him, addressed "Poste Restante, Paris," would reach him in due course, and receive his best and prompt attention. If any little pecuniary matter troubled Sir Archie's peace, he—De Laurnay—could only say his cheque-book was unreservedly at the service of his friend; on this subject he might, perhaps, write him at his leisure, but at the present moment he would only beg—

The entrance of a waiter at this juncture, bearing a telegram upon a salver, summarily arrested further eloquence on Gaston's part. He snatched the ominous missive with a trembling hand, and as Sir Archibald furtively scrutinised the expression of his friend's face as he hastily scanned the pencilled lines, a twinkle of amusement one moment glistened in his own shrewd, good-natured eyes.

"Excuse me, *mon cher*! a matter of importance! No time for explanations—urgent business, and—I'm off! Help yourself from the liqueur stand, call for brandy and soda—what you will! Good-bye for the present; and touch the bell as you go out!"

And before Sir Archibald had time even to attempt to reply, Gaston De Laurnay had seized his hat and hurried down the stairs; he had not forgotten, however, to thrust the telegram into the breast-pocket of his coat, despite his unwonted precipitancy.

Then the baronet flung himself upon a couch and burst into a roar of laughter.

"Jove! though, this is no moment for merriment!" he assured himself, in reproving tones, as he rallied and ran his fingers through his hair, preparatory to "putting on his thinking-cap" (as he murmured under his breath), "I wish him joy, poor devil! cooling his heels at Charing Cross! And now, what's the next move upon the board? Humph! to wait here, I suppose, until her arrival, and positively decline to leave the spot until, by fair means or foul, I succeed in carrying her off—by main force if necessary—back to Westlands this very night! Hang it all! I don't half relish the job. What on earth will she think of my interference? I'd be peppered—that I would! rather than get mixed up in an affair of this sort were it not for her sweet sake!"

The whole expression of the man's face changed magically as the last reflection crossed his mind; a smile played about the corners of his lips, a tender light gleamed one moment in his eyes.

"Poor Josephine!" he murmured, "she has had a difficult rôle to play; yet if she will but give me the chance, I will make her so happy in the future, that before long she shall cease even to remember the troubles of the past!"

As the last syllable died upon his lips, he was conscious of approaching footsteps without.

"Heavens!" he muttered, "'tis she, I fear—that is, I hope, for the sooner it's over the better; besides, each moment's delay renders his absence less secure!"

The door was pushed ajar, and as stealthily closed again before she even glanced around—Vivien herself, none other—one hand held timorously before her eyes.

"Gaston!" she cried, brokenly, staggering towards the nearest chair, "they told me you were out, but I—Oh! Heavens!" she fairly screamed, as glancing up her eyes met those of—not the man she expected, but of Sir Archibald Hope, who advanced respectfully towards her.

"Yes, Mrs. Staunton, De Laurnay, indeed is—in absent. But I—I can be of service to you, perhaps, in his stead," he began, gravely. There was no mistaking the ominous solemnity of his tone; and the wretched wife turned sick and faint, realizing that the hastily-laid plan had failed, and that she was in truth utterly undone. "In the first place, let me

escort you immediately to the station. We can leave Victoria for Westlands at 5.55; and the sooner we get back the better, as I'm sure you will, after due reflection, agree with me. Your father is badly hurt, you must remember, and was calling loudly for his favourite daughter when I parted from Josephine!"

"Go back!" she wailed. "Ah! you little guess—"

"I do more than 'guess'—I know all!" he answered, in a low voice. "This is no moment for subterfuge, so forgive plain speaking—it is ever best. Come back with me at once, my dear Mrs. Staunton, I beseech you, and all will yet be well! No one need ever suspect your absence. We can profess to—to the servants, or any one else who may have seen you, that you left to meet your husband, took the wrong direction—anything—what you will—and that you missed him on the way. Only remember, every moment is of importance. Believe me, sooner or later, you will be very thankful that I alone am here just now, instead of Gaston De Laurnay; and for Heaven's sake, let us get out of this at once!"

She had started to her feet, she was gazing wildly round; she flung her arms aloft like a hunted woman, with a low despairing moan.

"Go back! I—I dare not! And, oh! where, oh! where can Gaston be? Surely he has not played me false? Surely—"

"Nay, Mrs. Staunton, in common justice to the absent, I cannot allow you to believe that. I alone am culpable on that count, for I—I contrived to get Gaston out of the way! No, I do not ask your forgiveness now; I can wait for that! There will surely come a day—and that ere long—when you will thank me from the very bottom of your heart for all that I have ventured to take upon myself, not for your sake only, but for that, likewise, of—of one other! But we are wasting time whilst moments are most precious. Come, Mrs. Staunton, I beseech you, come at once! For every second wasted now you will later grieve a year!"

He caught her by the wrist, his voice and attitude were those of the most abject entreaty; but the wretched woman wrested herself from his grasp and flung herself into a low chair, wailing brokenly,—

"I dare not! Oh! I dare not face my husband! I am a guilty creature; and John may perhaps, be home to-day!"

"Ah! I forgot to tell you that! As I dashed in a fly from the Rectory to the station, I passed another cab rattling down towards Westlands, piled high with ponderous trunks and baggage—impedimenta, in short, which struck me as wearing a decidedly transatlantic air. There was a solitary passenger inside—your husband, probably—for I asked, and heard at the station that the Liverpool afternoon express was just in. He may be watching for your return even now at Westlands. Oh, Mrs. Staunton, come!"

But her sole response was a piteous moan; she covered her face with both her hands, rocking herself slowly backwards and forwards in a perfect agony of despair.

"Go to meet John? Never, never! Oh! Heaven! what shall I do?"

Voices without in loud dispute—an altercation, surely? The tramp of feet upon the stairs.

"I know what I'm about, sir! This is a free country, I presume? If I search every apartment in the house I'll find this Frenchman's rooms!"

"Oh, heavens! my husband! John's voice! John's! Oh! for pity's sake, Sir Archibald, shield me—save me! What can I do? If he finds me here, I—"

Speech failed her, and she could but wring her hands in mute entreaty. The baronet himself was painfully bewildered. Just then, moreover, there was not a second to reflect upon the best course to be pursued. Instinctively he flung open an inner door—leading he knew not whither—and motioned her towards it.

Without one syllable of protest, Vivien darted

past him, and took refuge in ambuscade within. Sir Archibald closed the door upon her noiselessly, and drew a long breath of relief. He would thus be enabled to temporise, at any rate—this much, at least, was certain gain.

"Sir!" the word was uttered at his ear in a low, authoritative tone, so stern, so hoarse, that guiltless though he was, and brave, dauntless man withal, yet Sir Archie afterwards confessed he felt his own heart momentarily quail, as turning he confronted one whom he instinctively recognized as John Staunton, albeit the two men had never met before.

"You—you are not—?"

"No, Mr. Staunton, I am not the man whom you presumably came here to meet. My name is Archibald Hope. Your wife's family do me the honour to regard me as their friend; and her—humph! Gaston De Laurnay, I am happy to say, is not here!"

Never to his dying day did the young Baronet forget the expression which just then flitted across the other's gray drawn face; his eyes momentarily flashed fire, his nostrils dilated, he drew himself up to his full height, his clenched hands hanging down straight and rigid by his sides.

John, indeed, was terrible to look upon just then—terrible in his mute, impotent anguish, his voiceless wrath, his helpless woe. Gazing at him Sir Arthur realized at once his misery and his love.

"He is not here!" he echoed in a voice of thunder—thunder when it rolls afar off among the hills; and his fingers clenched and unclenched themselves convulsively, as though it would, in truth, have gone ill with his foe had their deadly grip just then hovered near his throat. "Where is he? Who and what are you, who thus presume to thrust yourself between man and man? And where is she? Speak, fellow, speak! Where is the woman who was once my wife? Has she fled with Gaston De Laurnay?"

"Be calm, Mr. Staunton, I beseech you, and all will yet be well! Be calm, less for your own sake even than that of all those dear to you, as to myself. The Rector, remember, lies stretched this moment between life and death, crying out piteously for Vivien!—Vivien! who may yet be restored to him, and you, if—if only you will not act too hastily or deal too harshly in this critical emergency with the woman whom you love. Be calm, be reasonable, and I promise you all will yet end well."

"Go preach to others!" was the grim retort. Then, in imperious tones, John added,—
"Explain this moment, without further procrastination, the drift of all this. You may be the accomplice of that French scoundrel for aught I know. Your part may be to keep me fooling here. How can I tell who and what you are? Each instant is precious. If he be not here, where on earth is he? And where's she who was once my wife? Fellow! can't you speak?"

Seeing that the crucial moment had come at last, and that it would be worse than unwise to attempt to temporize further, the baronet armed himself for the worst.

"He—Gaston De Laurnay," he responded, quietly, "is nearing Charing-cross at this moment. I believe and fondly hope lured thither by a telegram which I ventured to send—er—humph! in a lady's name—a lady whom he expected here. I contrived to avoid a meeting (which I held undesirable) by the adoption of this simple ruse. The 'lady' wired briefly that she would explain all later—meanwhile she awaited her friend at the Cross. Off flew De Laurnay, whilst I remained—remained to receive your wife (plain words are best, Mr. Staunton, in a crisis like the present, so you will pardon them, I feel sure); your wife, who has not even seen De Laurnay; your wife, whom you can therefore take back as a penitent suppliant to your heart and home at once, Mr. Staunton—for her own sake, for yours, not less than for that of one who already stands, for aught we know, within the dread

shadow of the valley of death. Think of this before you act."

"Where is she?" cried John Staunton, hoarsely, covering his eyes with one hand, for indeed he felt himself in danger of being utterly unmanned.

"She is penitent—she is broken-hearted. She is here!" and with these last words Sir Archibald flung wide the inner door, and motioned Vivien to advance.

But there was no movement from within, no responsive murmur, no sign, no sound of a living presence, not even the *frou-frou* of a woman's dress.

For one moment the hearts of both men stood still, for one moment both gasped for breath; and as by mute accord they turned and gazed into each other's face, there was that just then in the eyes of both, which made these two fast friends till death.

Then together they advanced, to find Vivien lying in a huddled heap upon the floor, insensible, rigid, lifeless seemingly, with her golden head bowed in the dust, prone at the feet of that outraged husband whom she had lacked strength and courage to face.

At sight of that piteous spectacle, Staunton physically recoiled, shuddering visibly like a man who has received an unexpected blow.

"Oh, Heaven!" he groaned, "Oh, Heaven!" covering his face with both his hands.

Whilst Sir Archibald, kneeling down beside her, lifted Vivien's fragile form in his arms as though she had been a sleeping child, murmuring the while between his teeth,—

"Courage, Staunton, courage! This is the best thing perhaps, which could have happened, after all! You will be calmer, cooler when she wakes! able to realize what it would have been if—if she had never wakened more! Here, kiss your wife, man, kiss her! Your arms should bear her, not these of mine! Ye gods! she is scarce a feather's weight! Take her, Staunton, take her!"

(To be continued.)

The ashes of Columbus have been sadly disturbed since the great discoverer was first buried at Seville. Time after time his remains have been moved about till they finally lie in the Cathedral of Saint Domingo, and now they are to be turned out of their resting-place and enclosed in a plate-glass urn. This urn is to hold the casket containing the actual ashes in such a manner that the remains will be plainly visible.

TO THE GIRLS.—Stay at home occasionally; it is not necessary to be always in the street; home work is not mere drudgery, but useful ministrations to those we love. Don't mistake giggling for cheerfulness, slang phrases for wit, boisterous rudeness for frank gaiety, nor impertinent speeches for repartees. On the other hand, don't be prim, stiff, formal, nor assume a "country face" eloquent of "prunes, potatoes, prisms," nor sit bolt upright in a corner, hands, feet, eyes and lips carefully posed for effect. An effect will be produced, but not the one you wish. Nor yet sit scornfully reserved, criticising the dress, manners, looks, &c., of those around you. Make up your minds that your companions are, on the whole, a pretty nice set of people—if they are not, you had no business to come among them—that there is something to respect and like in each of them. Determine to have a nice time anyhow; then do your part to make it so. Be genial, cordial and frank. If you can play and sing ordinarily well do not refuse to take your share in entertaining your companions in that way. You cannot be expected to sing like a Nilsson or Kellogg. If you cannot play or sing, say so frankly, and do not feel humiliated. You probably excel in some other accomplishment. If you do not, you can possess that one grand accomplishment to which all others are accessories, that of being "a lady"—a true woman, gentle and gracious, modest and lovable.

FACETTE.

THUNDER-ACTION.—Walking in your sleep.

It is said that the trees which flourish best upon the hearth are ashes.

The champion light weight. A green grocer's ton of coal.

A nurse doctor sent in a certificate of death, and accidentally signed his name in the space for "cause of death."

"Does your sister Annie ever say anything about me,aisy?" asked an anxious lover of a little girl. "Yes," was the reply. "She said if you had rookers on your shoes they'd make such a nice cradle for my doll."

A country cousin visiting her society aunt was asked if she was fond of the Opera. "Oh yes," said she, passionately, "I am always perfectly carried away with delight when the lady rides round the ring and jumps through the hoops!"

A country editor has received the following: "Dear Sir—I have looked carefully and patiently over your paper for months for the death of some individual I was acquainted with, but as yet not a single soul I care anything about has dropped off. You will please to have my name erased."

"John," said the cashier's wife, dropping into the bank in the midst of a shopping trip, "you forgot to leave me that money this morning." "What name?" asked the cashier. "Name! name!" exclaimed the lady, "I am your wife." "No doubt," answered the cashier, mechanically, and going on with his writing; "but you will have to bring some one to identify you."

LONDON SOCIETY possesses two ladies who both bear the name of Isabelle, and who, standing to each other as they do in the relation of mother and daughter, are presumably of different ages, though, indeed, the difference might easily pass unperceived. A friend was heard lately to give the following account of them: "The one is named Isabelle—the other is aabelle."

Two rival belles, at an evening party, were seated in the conservatory with their respective cavaliers, enjoying their supper. The gas was turned down somewhat, as it should be in a conservatory at an evening party. "My dear Julia," said one of the fascinating creatures, "how beautiful your complexion is—in this dim light!" "Oh, thank you!" responded her rival. "And how lovely you look in the dark!"

At a restaurant a customer orders two soft-boiled eggs. The waiter promptly returns with two hard-boiled eggs. "If you had served these eggs up to a new customer, sir," thunders the guest, "he would have thrown them at your stupid head!" "Yes, sir—I know, sir," replies the waiter, smilingly. "But I wouldn't have done it, sir; I'd have been more careful, sir."

A few years ago the old King of Saxony was out hunting in company with the Emperor Francis Joseph. Night was coming on, and the two hunters were tired. Upon this they caught sight of an old peasant driving along in a cart. "Shall we take a lift in this cart?" queried the emperor. "Yes," said the king, "any part in a storm." The peasant welcomed them heartily, and when the royal couple reached their destination the king handed the honest farmer a few florins in reward, and said with a smile: "Do you know whom you have conveyed in your vehicle?" "Indeed, no." "You have just transported the Emperor of Austria and the King of Saxony." The peasant, convinced that he had to do with two jokers, responded in self-evidence: "And do you know who I am?" "Not more than you did us." "Well, I am the Shah of Persia!" And with that he cracked his whip and was soon out of sight.

WHEN a woman wants to be pretty she bangs her hair; and when she wants to be ugly she bangs the door.

A commentariat vote is something that is thrown at a man to make him feel bad because he is not quite popular enough to be elected.

"What is a missionary tea-party?" asked one lady of another, who replied, "Oh, it's where all the gossip and scandal must be about the hostess."

"Yes," said Mrs. Towser, as she exulted upon the beauties of her flower-garden. "I have given it great care, and if you come over in a week or two, I expect to be able to show you some beautiful market-pneumonia."

They were discussing an elopement, and one lady, turning to her friend, said: "Don't you believe it would kill you if your husband was to run away with another woman?" "It might," was she cool reply. "Great joy sometimes kills."

CHARLES LAIRD represented the ordinary churchgoer. "You don't seem to be any better for what I said to you," complained his friend. "No," was the beautiful and chaste reply, "but the man who sat next must be, because it all went in at one ear and out at the other."

A LITTLE girl of seven exhibited much disquiet at hearing of a new exploring expedition. When asked why she should care about it, she said: "If they discover any more countries, they will add to the geography I have to study. There are countries enough in it now."

One day a friend asked Lord Palmerston when he considered a man to be in the prime of life. The immediate reply was, "Seventy-nine! But," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "as I have just entered my eightieth year, perhaps I am myself a little past it."

"What is lighter than a feather?"
"The dust that blows in Summer weather."
"What is lighter than the dust, I pray?"
"The wind that blows the dust away."
"And what is lighter than the wind?"
"The lightness of a woman's mind."
"And what is lighter than the last?"
"Ah, where, my friend, you have me fast."

CHILDREN'S ANSWERS.—Children often surprise their elders by witty retorts. A bright little girl was once sent to get some eggs, and on her way back stumbled and fell, making sad havoc among the contents of her basket. "Won't you catch it when you get home, though!" exclaimed her companion. "No, indeed I won't," she answered; "I have got a grandmother." "Sophy, if you don't be quiet, I shall have to whip you," said the father of a large family, who always left the disagreeable duty of punishing the unruly to his wife. "Pooh!" contemptuously retorted the little incorrigible he addressed, tossing her curly head, "you ain't the mother." "How old are you, my little man?" asked a gentleman of a youngster of three years, to whom he was being introduced. "I'm not old," replied the little man; "I'm almost new." Boys' retorts are of a ruder character. A woman said to a youngster who had been impudent to her, "Little boy, have you a mother?" "No; but dad wouldn't marry you if there wasn't a housekeeper in the whole blessed land," was the reply. Little Tommy was having his hair combed by his mother, and he grumbled at the operation. "Why, Tommy, you oughtn't to make such a fuss. I don't, when my hair is combed." "Yes; but your hair ain't hitched to your head." Equally pertinent was the answer given by a great musical composer to a remark. When a youth he was clerk to a very rich, but exceedingly commonplace, in fact, stupid employer. One day, an acquaintance commiserated the clever lad on his position, saying, "What a pity it is that you are not the master and he your clerk." "Oh, my friend," returned the youth, "do not say that. If he were my clerk, what on earth could I do with him?"

Why should aeronauts not speak high words in a balloon? Because it is death to fall out.

The difference between a long and short yarn is very well illustrated by the difference of one's feelings in holding a skain for one's grandmother or for one's sweetheart.

MR. WICKHAM, a fiery schoolmaster, lost another scholar yesterday. This class was parsing a sentence. "What is the imperative of the verb 'to go'?" "Go!" shouted Johnny Fitzleop. "I don't know." "Go!" shouted Wickham. "Thank you, sir," replied Johnny, and he was two streets off before the teacher could catch his breath.

NEATLY PARRIED.—A gentleman who had been dining out the night before, went into a barber's shop one morning to be shaved. He saw that the barber had been taking more than was good for him, for his hand shook very much, and, naturally indignant, he began to give him a little moral advice by saying, "Bad thing, drink." "Yes," said the barber; "it makes the skin tender."

A GENTLEMAN of this city received the following telegram a few days ago: "Inform John his socks are down, and not to tell." This was puzzling, but the reflection that the new operators were not above making mistakes consoled the receiver of this remarkable message until he discovered that it meant John's socks were down, and he was not to sell.

CAPTAIN BOWEN mentions in his "Memoirs," that an English soldier who had been taken prisoner at the battle of Albuera, having contrived to make his escape, came to Lord Wellington to report his having been examined by South. Marshal Beresford was present. "Well, what did the French general say to you, my lad?" "Sir, he only wanted to know if the English general who commanded the day of the battle was hanged yet."

At one of their recent meetings the members of the Browning Society found themselves, it is said, in great straits. A certain passage puzzled them; but in the end they confessed, one and all, that they could make neither head nor tail of it. One, bolder than the rest, went straight to the post and craved his assistance. Mr. Browning assumed a practical air, and read the passage. He assumed a troubled air, and read it twice. He assumed an indignant air, and read it three times. He assumed a hopeless air, and returned the book to his visitor, saying that, if the society were ever able to make anything out of that passage, he would be glad to know the result.

A BASHFUL young man went three times to ask a beautiful young lady if he might be the partner of her joys and sorrows and other household furniture; but each time his heart failed him, and he took the question away unpopped. She saw the anguish of his soul, and had compassion on him. So, the next time he came, she asked him if he had thought to bring a screw-driver with him. He blushed, and wanted to know what for. And she, in the fullness of her heart, said she did not know but that he would want to screw up his courage before he left. He took the hint and the girl.

A WISE POEM.

(Every word containing the letter y.)
THE starry daisy, brightly, symboling simplicity,
Yellow-eyed, portending dainty beauty day by day;
Haply you may sympathize, enjoying my felicity—
Pretty daisy, lovingly my lady strays thy way!
Balmy zephyrs joyously betray my happy history;
Faithfully complying, honeyed ayables convey.
Everywhere my youthful fancy rhymes idyllic mystery;
Shy, my lady's lovely eyes accompany my lay.

SOCIETY.

The Princess Louise has presented a bust of herself at the age of three years to the Canadian National Art Gallery.

Lady Constance Howard has written another novel called "Only a Village Maiden," which will be shortly published in London.

The Duke and Duchess of Connaught are visiting the Red Prince and Princess Charles (parents of the Duchess) at Potsdam to take leave before starting for India; they are also expected at Baltimore in October.

Lord Yarnmouth, while a guest at Lord and Lady Tweedmouth's at Grimsthorpe, had a narrow escape. While the carriage in which his lordship was seated was turning at a narrow part of the road the pole broke, and the vehicle was dashed over an embankment and broken to pieces, while the horses were more or less injured. The noble lord fortunately escaped with only a few bruises.

The bestowal of the Garter, vacant by the death of the Duke of Marlborough, upon Prince Albert Victor, is remarkable for the fact that it is the first instance on record of the bestowal of the Order upon a minor, and further, that the heir apparent to the throne and his son have never previously held the insignia at the same time.

The presentation of a silver casket in the Cinque-cento style, the panels bearing views in bas-relief of Longleat House and Shearwater, was made at Longleat House by a committee, on behalf of the inhabitants of Warminster and neighbourhood. The casket contained an address signed by 800 heads of families, and was handed by the Rev. W. Hickman to Lord Weymouth, who, in reply, said that the gift and the address were especially gratifying to him as a proof of the friendly feeling that had always existed between Warminster and Longleat.

KING CHARLES OF ROUMANIA, as a present to Princess William of Germany, mother of his godson, gave an elegantly carved box containing products of native industry, woven material, embroidery, and a Roumanian costume, which consists of a silk garment elaborately embroidered, a petticoat and girdle woven in black and silver, and a veil of exquisite fineness. The box also contained a piece of muslin embroidered in gold and silver which has taken three years to produce.

The veil worn by Mlle. Buono on the occasion of her marriage with the Pope's nephew, Camillo Pecci, was of the most valuable lace known. It was of ancient Spanish manufacture, and had been bestowed by the great Queen Isabella on one of her ladies of honour, an ancestress of the bride. At the nuptial ceremony this veil was worn *à la Maeda* at the back of the head, falling over the shoulders, but not covering the face. The newly-married couple will inhabit a palazzo dependent on the Vatican.

BADEN-BADEN has been remarkably gay this season. While the Prince of Wales was visiting there a succession of festivities took place, and as a matter of course, the town was full; so much so, that the hotels were overcrowded, and large prices were had for the smallest accommodation. The races, which were favoured with brilliant weather, were a great attraction; but the costume ball, held in the largest of the new rooms, was a scene of much splendour. At a quarter to twelve the English National Anthem was heard, and from the garden entrance the Prince of Wales entered, followed by a large retinue, all dressed alike in white, with flat caps of the same on their heads. The ball was opened with a quadrille, the Prince dancing with Fraulein von Pechbismarck, the *vis-à-vis* being Prince Hermann von Weimar and Fraulein Svisteneff. Lady Charles Beresford, in the simple dress of a soubrette, looked charming.

STATISTICS.

THE VINE AT HAMPTON COURT.—The total number of bunches of grapes on the great vine at Hampton Court this year is about 1,200, or 120 in excess of last year. The vine was planted in 1769, from a slip off a vine at Valentines, in the parish of Ilford, Essex, and has been known to produce as many as 2,200 bunches in one year.

THE Celtic Magazine states that since the census of 1881 the population of Argyllshire Scotland, has declined from 100,973 to 78,468, and as to the latter number no fewer than 30,367 are classified as urban. The conclusion arrived at is that the rural population has been reduced in the course of the last fifty years from 85,793 to 46,091, or nearly one-half.

The population of the entire continent of India proper numbers 253,891,321 persons, who inhabit over 43,500,000 of dwellings, varying in kind and magnitude from the palaces of the king to the hut of the savage. There are 714,707 towns or villages, and the population is made up of 129,941,851 males and 123,949,970 females. There are 187,997,450 Hindoos, 50,121,585 Mohammedans, 6,426,511 nature-worshippers, 3,418,884 Buddhists, 1,862,643 Christians, 1,853,426 Sikhs, and 1,221,896 Jains.

GEMS.

STIFF IN OPINION always in the wrong.

As charity covers a multitude of sins before God, so does politeness before men.

A NOBLE part of every true life is to learn to undo what is wrongly done.

BE a philosopher; but amidst all your philosophy—be still a man.

INGRATITUDE is the very poison of mankind.

HE who does his best, however little, is always to be distinguished from him who does nothing.

SINCERITY does not consist in speaking your mind on all occasions, but in doing it when silence would be censurable and inexcusable.

LOST wealth may be replaced by industry; lost knowledge by study; lost health by temperance or medicine; but lost time is gone for ever.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PICNIC CAKE.—Two eggs and white of one, two cups of sugar, one-half cup of butter, one cup of sweet milk, three cups of flour, two tea-spoonfuls of cream of tartar, one of cake, and one or two tea-spoonfuls of lemon.

ELDERBERRY WINE.—To ten quarts of berries put five quarts of water, and let it stand twenty-four hours. Then boil and skim it; strain it, and to every gallon of the liquor put three pounds of sugar, half an ounce of cloves, one ounce of cinnamon, and two ounces of ginger. Boil it again, and ferment it, by putting in it a slice of toast covered with fresh yeast. By leaving out the spices this wine is said to resemble port.

APPLES FROM.—Boil and mash six apples; sweeten to taste; then beat with a silver fork or an egg-beater until very light and smooth. Beat the whites of two eggs to a strong froth and gradually beat in the apples. Flavour to taste with vanilla, lemon, nutmeg, or anything else preferred. Partially fill a glass bowl with rich boiled custard, and put the float upon the top. The float and custard should both be very cold.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE reason why borrowed books are so seldom returned to their owners is that it is much easier to retain the books than what is in them.

A NOVELTY in books has been introduced by a Dutch publishing firm. They print all their publications in blue ink on a light green paper, stating that this method does not fatigue the reader's eye.

INSTANTANEOUS PHOTOGRAPHY is reproducing the animal world of the Bavarian Highlands to the very life, thanks to the ingenious system of a native naturalist near Oberammergau. The photographer puts up his camera at some place in the higher regions much frequented by game, and connects it with an electric battery hidden some distance away. He then posts himself by the battery with a telescope, and directly he espies a suitable subject, touches a button which communicates with the camera, and so drops the slide, obtaining an instantaneous impression. The slight noise of the slide falling causes the animals to look up, thus giving a more animated likeness.

THE Deities of Tonkin are in great disgrace with their followers for allowing the French to maintain their position in the province, and, according to a correspondent of the Paris Temps, the Tonkinese intend to starve out the obdurate gods as a punishment. At a village near Hanoi—the citadel held by the French, whence the late disastrous sortie took place—all the bonzes from many miles round lately assembled in the pagoda, and held a service of intercession before a highly-venerated huge bronze figure of Buddha, under whose protection they had placed the citadel. After solemnly perambulating the village, performing various ceremonies, and making a great noise, they sternly reproved the god for his inaction, and decided that no offerings should be presented to him for a certain period. If by that time the French invaders have not disappeared, the deity is to be dethroned and another god set up in his stead, the bonzes being charged meanwhile to find out a more propitious divinity.

A HOUSE-COOLER.—They use in India what is called a "tattie," a large curved or sloping screen which accurately fits into each door or window facing the west, and is made of the roots of the khumhus grass, which singularly combines strength and flexibility with the most delicious and refreshing fragrance. These screens are about an inch in thickness, and during the hot and dry west wind are saturated from outside with water, which immediately commences evaporating under the fierceness of the blast; and as evaporation always implies cold, the wind which, in the verandah, would raise the thermometer to one hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit, passes into the house at seventy-five to eighty degrees, laden with a delicious fragrance. While tatties are in working order, all other cooling appliances are unnecessary.

THE Niagara rapids have certainly become a centre of attraction for foolhardy swimmers as a third ambitious individual now proposes to make the attempt. He is a Frenchman of twenty-five, and declares that Webb failed because he was a swimmer instead of a diver. He asserts that the feat can be accomplished by remaining a long time under water, and as he has already remained sixty-five seconds below the surface while swimming a catamaran, he feels certain of success. Two more lives have now been lost in the Niagara river at a point called the Rocks, midway between the Suspension Bridge and Lewiston. The river there is a narrow foaming torrent, and the Indians teach their boys to swim close in shore, but a few days ago two had ventured too far out, and were at once swept completely away. Their bodies were not found for five days.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. S. C.—The answer to the riddle is the word "Nothing."

AMY READER.—1. The 14th November, 1845, fell upon a Friday. 2. The name Ferdinand means pure peace.

S. L. G.—The bride and groom, after the ceremony, will go in the same carriage from the church to the home or to the depot.

CONSTANT READER.—One direct way would be to go from Dublin to Liverpool and thence straight to Birmingham. The fare would depend on the class and train, and could be easily ascertained in Dublin.

DARKER JACK.—Depilatories are not to be recommended, as they invariably injure the skin, often permanently. Constant use of the tweezers is the best remedy.

CONSTANT READER No. 2.—The method described is only practised by a foreign physician, and is not at all certain in its application. See previous answer.

LITTLE OWL.—There is no premium on the copper coin of George III. Your two silver coins dated 1795 and 1774 are Spanish of no special value. There is no premium on the German copper coin dated 1781.

EMERSON.—Do not yield to jealous fears and fancies. Probably your betrothed is entirely devoted and loyal. Do not annoy him with jealousy, but try to be amiable and companionable.

C. R. B.—By continual practice your writing can be improved to a great degree. Devote one hour each day to such practice, and you will be surprised at the result.

J. B. W.—Engagement rings in France and this country generally contain a diamond—either cluster or solitaire—according to the financial condition of the giver. Any stone-setting, however, may be used.

C. N.—There can be no objection to a lady accepting a trifling present from a gentleman, "such as a box of candles," even though there is no especial intimacy existing between themselves or their families.

D. S.—We think that you can safely go forward. After marriage you will not find the young lady so cold. Possibly you may be too ardent a wooer. Do not break off your engagement at this late day without a good and sufficient reason.

C. A.—The evening call should not generally be prolonged over an hour. With very intimate friends, however, it may be made a little longer; but the caller should be very careful that the visit be not made tiresome.

K. N.—The future, in this case, will depend entirely upon yourself. Pay your addresses to her in the same manner as the other gentleman, and if she shows any preference for your company, do not hesitate in asking her to become your wife.

P. F. D.—1. The salary of the position to which you aspire is regulated by the ability and experience of the applicant. There is no regular stipend. 2. To obtain such a situation letters from parties of influence will be necessary. 3. Any medical college will qualify you for the service.

FRED S.—Disturbances in the head are sometimes the result of some affection of the heart, and the ringing in the ears of which you complain is one of the symptoms of the enlargement of the ventricles of that organ. Should the trouble continue, consult a good physician concerning it.

D. A.—Should a gentleman call upon a lady in the evening, and find that the young lady has a lady friend calling upon her, there could be no impropriety, but rather an act of courtesy, for the gentleman to offer to accompany the young lady home, when she takes her leave, providing she has no escort.

DOMINA.—The young lady very probably regards you as a boy and is merely amusing herself with you. Until you are able to marry, you had better not go a-courting. Your parents' riches do not help you. When you have made your own way in the world, you will not be likely to be teased and snubbed by young ladies.

W. G. S.—There is a work on the subject in Weale's Series. Apply to Lockwood and Co., Stationers' Hall-court, E.C., London. It is supposed that coal was known to the ancient Britons. Henry III. is said to have granted a license to dig coals near Newcastle in 1284.

T. S.—The old saying "Faint heart never won fair lady," seems to be fully proven in your case, as, by being backward in your attentions to the young lady, you have been supplanted by a more wide-awake rival. Not being engaged to anyone, she has a perfect right to do as she pleases concerning the disposal of her love, and you are very foolish to think otherwise.

C. F.—The Dead Sea is about forty miles long, with an average breadth of nine miles. Its depth varies considerably, soundings in the north giving 230 fathoms (1,830 feet), which, however, gradually lessens towards the southern extremity, where the water is shallow. Its surface, which is lower than that of any water known, is 1,318 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. This sea is fed from the north by the Jordan River, and by many other streams, but has no apparent outlet, its superfluous water being supposed to be entirely carried off by evaporation. The proportion of saline matter in

this body of water is so great that while sea water only contains thirty parts of salt in 1,000 parts, it possesses about 250, or more than eight times that of the ocean. This excessive saltness is explained in several ways, the most acceptable of which is, that in all bodies of water without an outflow the water acquires an infusion of salt, its feeders constantly bringing in this material, while none of it evaporates. A curious plant grows on the borders of the Dead Sea, which yields a fruit called the Dead Sea Apple, beautiful on the outside, but bitter to the taste, and when ripened filled with fibre and dust.

F. N. G.—Ordinary stains in sheet zinc may be removed by washing it with a solution of diluted sulphuric acid and three parts of water. After using this preparation, the acid should be thoroughly cleaned off with soap and water. To scour or brighten zinc, use glycerine mixed with diluted sulphuric acid. Try at first a small quantity of both, and practice will soon enable you to employ it to proper proportions.

R. A. B.—To Japan old tea-trays, first clean them thoroughly with soap and water, and a little rottenstone; then dry them by wiping and exposure at the fire. Get some good copal varnish, mix with it some bronze powder, and apply with a brush to the denuded parts. After which set the tea-tray in an oven, at a heat of 212 degrees, until the varnish is dry. Two coats, it is said, will make it equal to new.

CANNA.—1. To make whipped cream, take two cups of cream, and one cup of white wine, grate in the skin of a lemon, and sweeten to your taste; add the whites of three eggs; then whip it in with a whisk; take off the froth; as it rises pour the froth into your jelly glasses. 2. Apply nitrate of silver to your warts. Be careful not to touch the skin. 3. No particular character.

A SUNSET FANCY.

To-night, as I sat at my window,
While the west was all agleam
With that strange and wonderful splendour,
That is fitting as a dream,
I thought that the hands of angels
Had flung Heaven's gateways wide,
And I caught some glimpses of the glory
From the hills on the other side.

Is it not a comforting fancy,
This sunset thoughts of mine,
That always the gates of Heaven
Swing open at day's decline—
That these whips work is all ended
From our earthly woes and ills,
May pass to the peace and gladness
That crown the beautiful hills?

Perhaps while I sat there dreaming,
Of the gateway in the west,
Some weary ones went homeward
To a long and endless rest.
Went in through the sunset gateway
To the city paved with gold;
To dwell in the hills of Heaven,
And be no longer old!

E. R. E.

M. W. G.—In this country the etiquette of engagements is not so strict as in France. A gentleman is expected to ask papa, state what his fortune is, what settlement he can make, to ask about the fortune of the bride, and then to send an engagement ring. He writes to all his friends, and the lady to hers; his relatives call soon on the bride-elect, and she is apt to go down to the country house to pay a visit to the sister of her beloved.

L. S. D.—In getting from the carriage the gentleman should alight first. He should quiet the horses and turn them, that the wheels may spread apart, retaining the reins in his hand, that he may hold the horses in case of fright. The lady should place her hands upon the gentleman's shoulders, while her escort, taking her by the elbows, will assist her carefully to the ground. Being aided thus in safely alighting, a lady will, oftentimes, be saved from injury.

LIE.—To make boots and shoes waterproof, to half a pint of drying oil add one ounce of turpentine and half an ounce of Burgundy pitch; mix carefully together in a glazed pipkin over a slow fire; lay the mixture over the boot or shoe with a sponge or soft brush, while yet warm, and when dry repeat the process, until the leather will hold no more. The boots or shoes must then be put away, and not worn until they are perfectly dry and elastic.

L. R. M.—The Vatican in Rome is the principal residence of the Pope, and the seat of the great library, museums, and collections of art, ancient and modern, which constitute one of the chief attractions for visitors to that city. Very soon after the establishment of the peace of the church under the Emperor Constantine, the popes occupied this building, although it appears to have been neglected for a long time during a part of the middle ages. Pope Nicholas V. (1447) was the first to begin the improvement and embellishment of the Vatican, being imitated by his successors up to the present day, thus rendering it so noted for beauty. The building, with its gardens and other belongings, covers an enormous area, and the number of rooms in the building itself is given as 4,422. Prominent among these may be mentioned the chapel of San Lorenzo, the Pauline Chapel, the Sistine Chapel (which is decorated with

frescoes by Michael Angelo), the library, which, although surpassed in the number of volumes, stands without a rival in beauty of proportions and in decorations; and the galleries of antiquities (Christian and pagan) paintings, statuary, medals, bronzes, vases, and other beautiful objects of art. Many of its galleries and halls were decorated by Raphael and other world-renowned artists.

P. M. G.—If the young man has no prospect of being able to marry, he is acting very ungenerously in taking up your time and interest. It is far better in him to leave you heart-whole and free to accept a better equipped suitor. Your parents should assist you. No young lady should allow herself to be drawn into a love which may not end in marriage. A pair of slippers or elbow-buttons make a nice present. The hair enclosed is auburn.

C. L. R.—To gain the love of a young man who appears to think so little of you is a difficult and at the same time a most delicate undertaking. The gentle sex should never thrust themselves on gentlemen, as by so doing they injure themselves greatly in the mind of the latter. Men do not care to win a prize so easily, preferring rather to pursue than be pursued. Treat the gentleman with the utmost politeness at all times, showing him those delicate attentions of which woman is the mistress, and it may be that before long he will become a suitor to your hand.

R. M.—The earliest matches of which there is any record were thin strips of wood about six inches long, and tipped with brimstone or sulphur. These were used in connection with the old tinder-box, one being applied to the smouldering tinder, into which a spark had been struck with flint and steel. The first friction matches, or lucifers, were invented by a chemist named Walker, of Stockton-on-Tees, in 1825. They were tipped with a paste composed of chlorate of potash, sulphate of antimony and starch, and were ignited by being drawn between folds of sand paper. For convenience in carrying, they were made in the shape of a comb.

L. V.—To make saltier water, take of chloride of calcium and chloride of magnesium, each 1 grain. Dissolve these in a small quantity of water, and add to it a similar solution of 8 grains of bicarbonate of soda, 20 grains of common salt, and 2 grains of phosphate of soda. Mix, and add a solution of 1 grain of sulphate of iron. Put this mixture into a 20 ounce bottle, and fill up with aerated water. Another imitation of saltier water is made by putting into a stone bottle filled with water 2 drachms of bicarbonate of soda and a like quantity of citric acid in crystals, corking the bottle immediately.

N. B.—Knowing the young gentlemen so well, it is for you to judge which will prove the most suitable for a husband. We would not care to assume the responsibility of advising you which to choose, although it would be best to leave the one who possesses neither good nature nor property severely alone. Looking at the case from a romantic point of view, the one who is penniless and homely, but endowed with an angelic temperament, might prove a desirable life-companion. Practically, however, this latter quality will not supply the necessities of life, unless its owner has plenty of grit and is willing to work hard for the maintenance of his beloved.

A. B. D.—The proportions of a beautiful human body are the following: The height should be exactly equal to the distance between the tips of the middle fingers of each hand when the arms are fully extended. Ten times the length of the foot, or seven and a half times the length of the foot, or five times the diameter of the chest from one armpit to the other, should also give the correct height of the body. The distance from the junction of the thighs to the ground should be the same as from that point to the crown of the head. The knee should be exactly midway between the same point and the bottom of the heel. The distance of the elbow to the tip of the middle finger should be the same as from the elbow to the middle line of the breast. From the top of the head to the level of the chin the distance should be equal to that from the level of the chin to that of the armpits, and from the heel to the toe.

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